DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 255 459 SO 016 378

TITLE Literary Studies. Course HP04b: Part Time BA Degree Programme.
INSTITUTION Griffith Univ., Brisbane (Australia). School of Humanities.
PUB DATE 83
NOTE 100p.; For related courses, see SO 016 371-385. Although readings designed to supplement the course are not included, complete bibliographic information is provided.
PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom Use - Materials (For Learner) (051)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Course Content; Course Descriptions; External Degree Programs; Foreign Countries; Higher Education; Independent Study; *Literary Criticism; *Literature; Nontraditional Education
IDENTIFIERS *Australia

ABSTRACT

This course, one of 16 sequential courses comprising phase one of a part-time Bachelor of Arts degree program in Australian Studies, examines the bases for the selection of particular works of Australian literature as classics. The roles played by educational curricula and by literary criticism in presenting an Australian literature in the context of an Australian society are considered. The course is designed for independent study combined with tutorial sessions. Chapter 1 is an introduction to the course and its study objectives. Chapter 2 deals with the meaning of literary traditions. Chapters 3, 4, and 5, examine the emergence of Australian literature, by focusing on Australian literary history, the intelligentsia, nationalism, and debate at the university level. Chapter 6, "New Definitions of Australian Literature," considers challenges to literary orthodoxy. Chapter 7 reviews the previous chapters. Materials for tutorial sessions cover chapters 1-6. Also included are lists of required readings, additional readings, a bibliography, and self-assessment questions. (IS)

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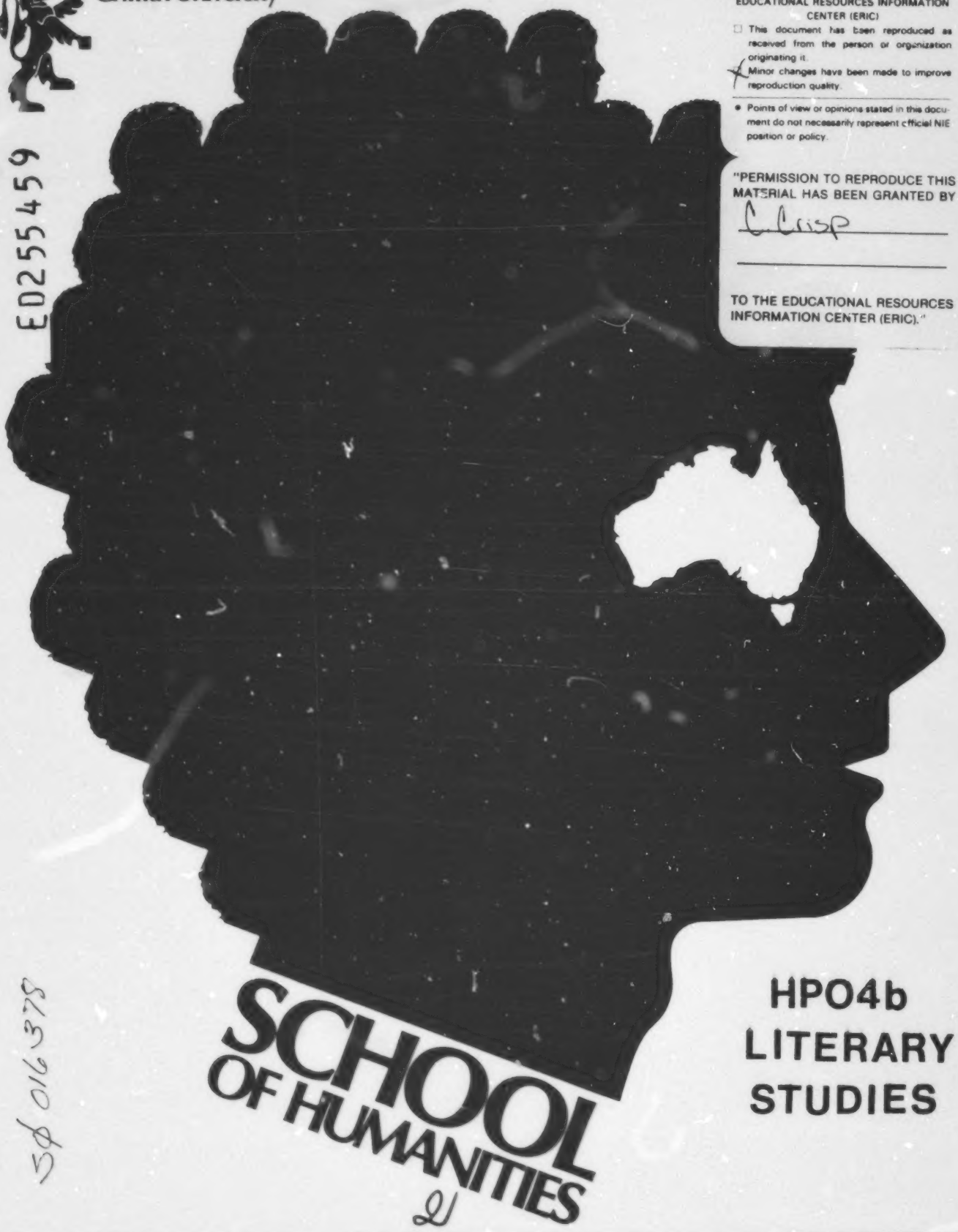

SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES

HPO4b LITERARY STUDIES

PART TIME BA DEGREE

GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES

PART-TIME BA DEGREE PROGRAMME

COURSE HP04b

LITERARY STUDIES

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Course readings

Two books have been prescribed for this course. Both are available from the University bookshop. They are:

1. Thomas Keneally, *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith* (Fontana, 1978) ($3.95)

2. Geoffrey Serle, *From Deserts the Prophets Come* (Heinemann, 1973) ($6.50)

The first of these is a novel, and you should begin reading it as soon as possible if you have not already done so. Aim to finish it before you get to the end of section 3 of this course, where the first extended reference is made to it. The second book is intended mainly as a source of factual information on Australian cultural history, to be used as and when you feel the need to find out more about particular writers and artists in their social and cultural contexts.

Tutorial activities

There are three tutorials scheduled for this course. They are referred to in this study guide on pages 21, 46 and 76. Each of the first two tutorials will be primarily concerned with problems arising out of the materials which precede it in the study guide. The third tutorial will be primarily concerned with the assessment item. Of course, attendance at tutorials is optional.

Assessment

There is one assessment item for this course. You will be required to write an essay analysing a group of four pieces of writing (readings 37-40) which are not commented upon in the study guide. The required length of the essay is 2500 words. If you look at the assessment item you will notice that it includes both the general topic and a large number of general and specific questions. These are designed to help you to generate ideas for your essay and to suggest a possible way of organising it. For this course you would be well advised <u>not</u> to spend a lot of time thinking about the assessment item before reading the course materials as the former is closely tied to the terms and concepts used in the course.

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LIST OF READINGS

Readings are numbered in order of use, and aggregated according to the section of the study guide in which they first appear.

(Note: This list does not include readings from the purchased text books.)

Section 2 (pink cover)

Reading 1. R.P. Bilan, 'The idea of the "great tradition"' (excerpts)

Reading 2. Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (excerpts)

Reading 3. P. McCaughey, *National Times Colour Magazine* (excerpts)

Reading 4. P. McCarthy, *National Times Colour Magazine* (excerpt)

Reading 5. D. Bromfield, 'Never mind the quality' (excerpts)

Reading 6. C.A. Evatt, 'Letter to the editor' (excerpts)

Section 3 (cream cover)

Reading 7. S.G. Firth, 'Social values in the New South Wales primary school, 1880-1914'

Reading 8. J.B. Hirst, 'The pioneer legend'

Reading 9. Queensland Board of Secondary School Studies, *Handbook of External Examination Requirements for 1982* (excerpt)

Reading 10 and Reading 11. Queensland Board of Secondary School Studies, *Syllabus in English, Years 8-12* (excerpts)

Reading 12 and Reading 13. John Dixon, *Brodie's Notes on Thomas Keneally's 'The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith'* (excerpts)

Reading 14. 'Letters to the Brisbane *Telegraph*' (excerpts)

Reading 15. Queensland Board of Secondary School Studies, 'Summary of a *Review of School-Based Assessment in Queensland Secondary Schools*' (excerpt)

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Section 4 (yellow cover)

Reading 16. John Docker, 'Sydney versus Melbourne revisited' (excerpts)

Reading 17. Tim Rowse, *Australian Liberalism and National Character* (excerpts)

Reading 18. John Docker, 'University teaching of Australian literature' (excerpts)

Reading 19. Brian Kiernan, 'Literature, history and literary history' (excerpts)

Reading 20. T. Inglis Moore, 'The social element in literature' (excerpt)

Section 5 (blue cover)

Reading 21. Bruce Bennett, 'Australian literature and the universities' (excerpts)

Reading 22. A.D. Hope, 'Australian literature and the universities'

Reading 23. A. Norman Jeffares, 'Australian literature and the universities' (excerpt)

Reading 24. Vance Palmer, 'Australian literature and the universities' (excerpts)

Reading 25. John Docker, 'How I became a teenage Leavisite and lived to tell the tale' (excerpt)

Reading 26. Meyer Howard Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (excerpts)

Reading 27. John Docker, 'University teaching of Australian literature' (excerpts)

Reading 28. H.P. Heseltine, 'The literary heritage'

Reading 29. A.A. Phillips, 'The literary heritage re-assessed'

Reading 30. Leonie Kramer, ed., 'Prefatory note and introduction' (excerpts)

Reading 31. John Docker, 'Leonie Kramer in the prison-house of criticism'

Reading 32. Adrian Mitchell, 'Thomas Keneally and the scheme of things' (excerpts)

Reading 33. Henry Reynolds, 'Jimmy Governor and Jimmie Blacksmith'

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Section 6 (mauve cover)

Reading 34. Bruce Bennett, 'Australian literature and the universities' (excerpt)

Reading 35. David Walker, *Dream and Disillusion* (excerpt)

Reading 36. Terry Sturm, 'Thomas Keneally and Australian racism'

Assessment item (red cover)

Reading 37. Queensland Board of Secondary School Studies, *Syllabus in English, Years 8-12* (excerpt)

Reading 38. G.A. Wilkes, 'Going over the terrain in a different way' (excerpts)

Reading 39. Helen Daniel, 'Purpose and the racial outsider' (excerpts)

Reading 40. Michael Cotter, 'The image of the Aboriginal in three modern Australian novels' (excerpts)

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PRELIMINARY EXERCISE

Before beginning the work of the course proper, indicate (by placing a tick in the appropriate boxes) which of the items listed below you feel do not belong in the category 'Australian literature'.

☐ 1. A.B. Paterson, 'The Man from Snowy River'

☐ 2. D.H. Lawrence, *Kangaroo* (English author, set in Australia)

☐ 3. Christina Stead, *The Man Who Loved Children* (Australian author, set - and written - in the U.S.)

☐ 4. Capt. W.E. Johns, *Biggles in Australia*

☐ 5. Vasso Kalamaras, *Alla Chormata* (*Other Earth*) (Greek language short stories by a Greek-Australian)

☐ 6. Patrick White, *Voss*

☐ 7. Jack Lindsay, *Life Rarely Tells* (an autobiography, set mainly in Australia)

☐ 8. An Aboriginal narrative (on tape) of the Dreamtime

You will notice that except for the first and sixth, all of the items on the list have something about them which, it could be claimed, is either 'not really Australian', 'not really literature', or not really either (e.g. *Biggles*). Go back over your responses. Where you have excluded an item from the category 'Australian literature', note down the reason for having done so.

You will no doubt have felt uncertain about one or more of the items. There are no 'correct' responses. The point of the exercise is to give you some sense of the different criteria that might be applied in deciding what <u>is</u> or <u>isn't</u> Australian literature. A criterion of the author's nationality, for example, would exclude 2 and 4; a criterion of Australian residency would exclude 3 and 7 (7 might also be excluded for not being a novel, poem or play). Being written in Australia, being <u>set</u> in Australia (3), being written in English (5), or being <u>written</u> at all (8), are further conditions that might or might not be made indispensable conditions of Australian-ness - and each would include and exclude different groups of items.

This course will <u>not</u> help you to discover the best way of identifying Australian literature. The following introduction to the course will explain what it <u>is</u> trying to do.

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1 INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE AND ITS STUDY OBJECTIVES

What this course sets out to examine is the place and function of 'literature' in Australian society. In a sense, we are posing the question which is implicit in the preliminary exercise, 'What is Australian literature?' But the purpose of asking it is not so much to find a straightforward answer (as if there were certain absolute criteria that could always be applied, certain clear and self-evident boundaries between what is an 'Australian literary work' and what isn't one); the purpose is rather to understand what is behind the question. We shall be concerned, for example, with how, why and when the notion of 'Australian literature' emerged and developed; how it was defined and by whom; how it functions in the Australian education system. We shall be looking, too, at the ways in which different writers, or groups of writers, gain or lose favour according to changes in what may be called the 'institution' of Australian literature, and in Australian society generally. We shall be particularly concerned with the way in which Australian writing is studied - that is, with the critical and historical assumptions and methods used to analyse, interpret and comment on it - and with the relationship between literary studies and broader intellectual movements in Australian society.

The body of the course is divided into five main sections (2-6). Section 2 will deal with certain key concepts - tradition, canon, hegemony, orthodoxy - which occur in discussions of Australian literature, and will be used in this course. Using some of these concepts, a simple theoretical model will be constructed of the processes involved in defining (and redefining) 'Australian literature', and this model will be applied in a brief examination of a recent cultural controversy. Sections 3, 4 and 5 will deal with these processes at greater depth, and in three distinguishable areas of Australian society where literature is read and studied: the schools, the 'intelligentsia' and the universities. Section 6 will consider the ways in which orthodox or 'hegemonic' ways of defining and reading Australian literature are being challenged.

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2 LITERARY TRADITIONS AND CANONS

In this section, we shall be examining three concepts which figure prominently in discussions of Australian literature, and of literature in general: the concepts 'literary tradition', 'literary canon' and 'critical orthodoxy'.

2.1 The literary tradition

You have already spent a lot of time - most of Course HP01b, *Traditions* - reading and thinking about tradition as a general socio-cultural process - 'keeping the past alive in the present' - and about traditions as particular concrete instances of that process. In literary studies the term is sometimes used in a more or less straightforward application of the socio-cultural sense, as in particular 'traditions' of literary forms, such as, for example, the tradition of the funeral elegy, where what is meant is a set of formal and stylistic prescriptions (a 'recipe', if you like) for writing a certain kind of poem (an elegy) on a certain topic (bereavement). However, such uses of the term are in fact fairly rare in discussions of modern writing.

SAQ 1

1. Give another historical example of a literary tradition in the formal/stylistic sense. (Course HP03b, *Authorship*, should be a useful reference here.)

2. Why is it unusual to find such traditions identified in discussions of contemporary writing? Note: there are two components to this question, viz:

   (a) Why might such traditions not be present in modern writing to any great extent?

   (b) Why might modern commentators not recognise them even if they were present?

3. Can you name any forms of contemporary writing which could be described as 'traditional' in this sense of conforming to long established prescriptions as to form and subject matter?

Within this formal meaning of literary tradition, as the transmission, through time, of particular ways of writing, it is possible to speak of particular ideas and attitudes as well. In many cases, specific traditions - say that of the funeral elegy - carried with them prescriptions about what should be said, what feelings expressed and so on, as well as how it should be said. (Again, this will be familiar from Course HP03b, *Authorship*.) But it is at this point - the point where ideas and attitudes enter the picture - that

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the formal meaning of tradition begins to merge with another, stronger meaning which has been much more influential in the study of literature this century. We can call this the normative meaning of literary tradition. 'Normative' comes from the second of the two senses of the term 'norm' which are defined on p.17 of Course HP01b, *Traditions*: an ideal or standard to which conformity is expected. A normative tradition is thus one which sets up ideals or standards. It differs from the formal meaning of literary tradition - the one we've been discussing up till now - in at least two ways:

1. It is seen as a repository of shared social and moral values rather than particular formal conventions of writing.

2. There is only one such tradition admitted by its supporters, not several, in whatever cultural context is being assumed - e.g. 'the nation', 'Western civilisation', 'the world'. It is therefore usually referred to as the tradition.

2.1.1 F.R. Leavis and the 'great tradition'

The best-known formulation of 'the tradition' in this normative sense, within literary studies in English, is that of the critic F.R. Leavis. You have encountered Leavis as a social critic in Course HP04a, *Cultural Formations*. His conception of 'the tradition' in literature, while it is clearly related to his views on society and culture, represents a more strictly literary aspect of his critical activity. The first reading is a piece from a recent study of Leavis's literary criticism - you have already used this study in Course HP04a - which focuses on Leavis's account of the 'great tradition' in English fiction. Remember that this is from a book about F.R. Leavis by R.P. Bilan. Except for the three quotations from Leavis's own critical writings, on pp.1 and 2, what we have here is somebody's critical analysis (Bilan's) of Leavis's ideas - not Leavis himself.

One further point should be made before you begin the reading. Although Leavis first located his 'great tradition' within the English novel - or more specifically within the work of five novelists (Jane Austen, George Eliot, Henry James, Joseph Conrad and D.H. Lawrence) - he seemed to extend it, in later criticism, to include not only other novelists (e.g. Dickens), but other writers who were not novelists (e.g. Blake), and even some artists who were not writers (e.g. Hogarth). Leavis's vagueness about formal literary categories has been attacked, but given his over-riding concern with the values expressed, it is not clear that this is a serious weakness in his position.

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Read R.P. Bilan, 'The idea of the "great tradition"' (excerpts) reading 1, and answer the questions that follow.

****

SAQ 2

1. What kind of entity is Leavis's 'great tradition'?

   (a) a process of transmission
   (b) a number of works
   (c) a number of writers
   (d) a set of values
   (e) none of the above

2. What kinds of attributes characterise works within the great tradition?

   (a) specific literary features
   (b) specific moral attitudes
   (c) 'greatness' as literature
   (d) 'English-ness'
   (e) none of the above

3. What kinds of connections are there between works or authors in the great tradition?

   (a) direct influence/'indebtedness'
   (b) 'affinity'
   (c) none, necessarily

4. Who are some of the English writers not included in Leavis's great tradition? Can you infer a general reason for their exclusion? If so, write it out in one sentence.

5. What reason, if any, might there be for not going along fully with John Gross's 'dismissal of the entire concept' of the 'great tradition'?

Leavis's idea of a normative literary tradition is notoriously resistant to being pinned down to a precise and consistent definition, but it is possible, on the basis of the first reading, to perceive some of the separate operations which are necessarily involved in a project such as his, that is, in the construction of a normative literary tradition. These operations comprise:

1. the selection of certain items for inclusion in the tradition, and the exclusion of others

2. the making of connections (of one kind or another)

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5. reading or interpreting individual items in ways that ensure their conformity with the norms of the tradition as a whole.

2.1.2 Raymond Williams and the 'selective tradition'

The second reading is intended to clarify these operative features of a normative literary tradition with an account given by a writer who, while closely involved with the study of literature, is not committed, as Leavis was, to endorsing the power of such a tradition. The reading is an excerpt from the book *Marxism and Literature* (1978) by Raymond Williams. (You may feel you have had just about enough Williams by now, having been subjected to his far from transparent prose in three previous courses. This is his last appearance until Course HP08b, *Disciplines*.)

Before you read this piece you should be aware that Williams is talking about cultural tradition, a broader category which includes literary traditions; hence, his remarks should be applicable to literary instances. As a matter of fact, Williams's earlier discussions of tradition do refer quite explicitly to literature. In his book *The Long Revolution* (1961), for example, there is an extended discussion of the selective processes by which we come to have a certain idea about, say, the nineteenth-century English novel. He makes the point that not one but several distinguishable processes of selection operate to produce the small number of 'classics' we think of as constituting 'the nineteenth-century novel'. In fact, of course, they represent an extremely small fraction of all the novels published in England in the nineteenth century; and this fraction is not arrived at by the mere passage of time, as is frequently imagined, but as the result of active choices continually being made in accordance with a variety of special interests, including class interests. As Williams puts it in this earlier discussion,

> In a society as a whole, and in all its particular activities, the cultural tradition can be seen as a continual selection and re-selection of ancestors. Particular lines will be drawn, often for as long as a century, and then suddenly with some new stage in growth these will be cancelled or weakened, and new lines drawn. (Williams, 1961, pp.52-53)

The 'lines' he refers to link past and present in certain ways: for example, a certain normative tradition may insist that Dickens is the most important nineteenth-century novelist - which means that from a present perspective he seems so. But the apologist for a different literary tradition may wish to deny that Dickens had that special importance and to give it instead (as Leavis did) to the woman novelist George Eliot. But, in fact, both names would probably surprise a member of the mid-nineteenth-century book-buying public, for whom the important novelists, if they included Dickens, would also have included

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G.M.W. Reynolds, G.P.R. James and James Grant - names probably as unfamiliar to you as they are to us!

In general terms, what Williams is saying is that the processes of selection, connection and interpretation by which a normative tradition is produced are operating all the time, whether or not somebody like Leavis decides to perform the operations consciously and overtly. A better way of putting it would be to say that Leavis's 'great tradition' was part of a larger pattern of cultural activity in which normative traditions - 'great traditions' - are continually being adjusted, extended, modified and occasionally displaced.

In the passage you are now going to read, you will encounter the term 'hegemony'.

A brief definition will suffice at this stage. Hegemony refers to the complex interlocking of political, social and cultural forces by which the domination of one class in society, and the subordination of others, is effectively maintained. The important emphasis in the concept of hegemony is on the complexity and diversity of social experience; it has this emphasis in common with the notion culture in the broad sense used by Williams and others (see Course HP04a, *Cultural Formations*). Where it purports to go beyond culture is in recognising explicitly the presence of class domination in society; it shares this recognition with Marxist concepts of ideology. Because it insists on the highly diversified and developing nature of domination, hegemonic analysis implies the possibility of an equally diversified and developing set of practices - in politics, in education, in 'lifestyle' and so on - which oppose the hegemony. Taken together, these constitute what Williams sometimes calls 'the counter-hegemony'.

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Now read Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (excerpts), reading 2 and complete the SAQ on the next page.

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SAQ 3

1. Re-read the first sentence of the fourth paragraph of reading 2, where Williams instances four types of 'practical continuity' with which particular cultural traditions may be associated: 'families, places, institutions, a language'. Can you think of a specific example of each of the last three that could be seen as lending support to a literary tradition?

2. Explain, in your own words as far as possible, Williams's view of what would constitute effective counter-hegemonic work in the area of literary studies. (Note: you will need to infer Williams's view for the particular area of literary studies.)

3. Williams indicates two points at which the 'selective tradition' is vulnerable to counter-hegemonic resistance. The first is the mere existence of materials from the excluded areas of past culture: these can be taken up, reinterpreted and revalued, and included in alternative traditions which explicitly challenge the authority of the dominant tradition. The second point is described very abstractly, in the three sentences beginning ten lines down in the second column, 'Vulnerable also because ... broken.' The first two sentences make the point in fairly general terms; the third analyses it in more detail. See if you can paraphrase Williams's point and think of an example to illustrate it.

2.2 Literary canons and critical orthodoxies

In your reading on literary tradition up to this point it may have struck you that the word 'tradition' seems to refer to different entities at different times. In fact, this issue is explicitly raised, in relation to Leavis's use of the concept, in SAQ 2 (1), where the range of possible meanings is suggested. Even Williams, whose definitions are fairly unambiguous, actually uses the word with, at times, something of Leavis's ambiguity. Unquestionably, there are times when both writers, in speaking of 'the tradition', seem to mean not the process but the product of the operations of selection and exclusion: the selected (and thereby privileged) group of works itself. Without wishing to exaggerate the confusion that this extension of the concept can cause, we shall certainly do no harm by introducing a term commonly used by other writers - some of whom will figure later in the course - to denote specifically the actual group of works in which (we might say) the normative tradition is embodied at a given time. The term is 'canon'.

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The origins of this term are ecclesiastical; it used to refer - and still does - to those books of Holy Scripture which were pronounced to be the authentic Word of God, and which were then separated from those books (such as the Book of Esdras) which were pronounced inauthentic and named the Apocrypha - hence the word 'apocryphal'. A secularised meaning of the term 'canon' has been current for some centuries in the field of bibliographical scholarship: an author's 'canon' comprises those works which can be confidently attributed to him or her. You will have touched on this meaning in Course HP03b, *Authorship*. The other secular meaning of 'canon', the one we shall be concerned with in this course, is the group of works whose 'authenticity' is vouched for by the normative tradition. We can therefore speak (with much less risk of confusion than if we were to use the adjective 'traditional') of 'canonical' works or texts, and 'canonical' authors.

'Orthodoxy', a more commonly used term than 'canon', also has a religious pedigree. It referred (and still refers) to those <u>doctrines</u> of the church that were held to be true and binding. So, for example, the 'orthodoxy' of the Church of England is officially defined by the Thirty-nine Articles, first drawn up in the sixteenth century.

'Orthodoxy' has many secular applications (including sporting ones). The one we are interested in applies to certain sets of assumptions, preoccupations and techniques in literary criticism which are regarded as 'orthodox'. In sections 4 and 5 we shall be looking at two 'critical othodoxies', one of which displaced the other in Australian literary studies. And in section 6, we shall glance at certain 'heterodox' (i.e., non-orthodox) tendencies in criticism which threaten to subvert the present orthodoxy, and may yet come to form another, different orthodoxy.

The relations between a literary canon and a critical orthodoxy can be very complex and interesting. Even though a critical orthodoxy presents itself as a way (the best way) of analysing any and all literary works, the fact is that some criticism works better with some kinds of literature than with other kinds. The orthodoxy can therefore influence the canon (i.e., those works deemed to be 'worth criticising'), as well as being influenced by it.

2.3 <u>A theoretical model</u>

We are in a position now to propose a simple model of the operations involved in the production of a normative literary tradition. It would consist of three operations: <u>selection</u>, <u>connection</u> and <u>interpretation</u>. These are very broad terms, designed to cover a range of particular instances. The <u>selective</u> operation would cover the inclusion and exclusion of single texts or authors, particular 'schools' or movements (the Pre-Raphaelites, for example), even whole historical 'periods'. Its most

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tangible product is the canon, that body of preferred authors or works which most faithfully represents the values of the normative tradition.

The connective operation covers the various practices which serve to link the selected items to each other and to the present, in what Williams calls a 'predisposed continuity'. Typically, it takes the form of a historical narrative, either a 'literary history' proper, or a cultural history, with literature as one element in a broader scheme of cultural development over time. (Serle's *From Deserts the Prophets Come* and Russel Ward's *The Australian Legend* are both examples of the latter, and we shall be looking closely at an example of the former, *The Oxford History of Australian Literature*, at the end of section 5.)

The interpretative operation covers those techniques for 'reading' or 'decoding' individual items in such a way as to demonstrate their conformity to the norms of the tradition, and confirm their membership of the canon. Such techniques of 'decoding' or 'reading' or, as is often the case, 're-reading' literary texts within a normative context are what is practised and taught as literary criticism. Taken together, these techniques (and the assumptions about literature on which they rest) constitute the critical orthodoxy of a given tradition.

The model proposed could be summed up as follows: normative literary traditions are produced and reproduced by operations of selection, connection and interpretation, which manifest themselves, typically, in canons, literary and cultural histories, and literary criticism respectively.

It may be necessary, before attempting to apply the model to a real situation, to explain and qualify it somewhat. You should note, first, that the three operations are not as separate in practice as they may seem to be in the model: literary history and criticism, for example, interpenetrate in a variety of ways, and similarly the canonisation of particular works (or groups of works) both determines, and is determined by, dominant modes of literary history and criticism. Secondly, there is no suggestion that the three operations necessarily occur in the order they have been discussed here. Even within the boundaries of the one normative tradition, the 'first' process, that of selection, is never final, but must be continually repeated as new literary works are produced, which have to be classified, and then included or excluded from the canon. This activity necessarily comes after, and is affected by, the existing state of literary history and criticism at the time.

There is, on the other hand, a certain logic in the progression: selection, connection, interpretation. It is a logic of increasing reflectiveness. Of the three operations, that of selection may be taken as the least intellectually reflective. The relevance of this observation is that it suggests that the selective operation

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is more subject to direct ideological determination than are the other two operations. Literary works can more easily be treated as expressions of approved attitudes and values than can works of literary history or criticism which do not, in general, purport to be representing or commenting upon 'life' directly, but upon literature. In other words, a canon is likely to be more directly affected by the social and moral values which are dominant in society at a given time than are the practices of literary history and criticism. These may be just as profoundly, but not as directly and therefore not as obviously, affected by such 'extra-literary' forces. Section 3 begins with an instance of a very direct relationship between ideology and selection in primary schools at the turn of the century. Sections 4 and 5, on the other hand, describe instances in which the other two operations are more crucial in maintaining particular traditions, and in which the effects of ideology are less directly and simply manifested.

2.4 An example: the Australian National Gallery

We shall conclude this section with a brief examination of a recent controversy in the media which illustrates the main features of the proposed theoretical model in a particularly clear and compact way. The controversy is concerned with the visual arts rather than literature, but the model is broad enough to apply to cultural traditions in general; and there may even be an advantage in looking first at how normative traditions work in painting and sculpture, since it is perhaps easier to discern the operations involved in constructing such a tradition when the cultural objects being worked upon are themselves silent.

The controversy revolves around the collection of the newly opened Australian National Gallery. In a special colour supplement to the October 1982 issue, the *National Times* published an 'introduction' to the collection by the director of the Victorian Gallery, Patrick McCaughey (pronounced 'McKackey'), together with a shorter piece on 'the philosophy behind the collection', and a number of colour reproductions. The following week, the *National Times* published a lengthy 'dissenting view' by David Bromfield, an academic art critic, to be followed a week later by a rejoinder from Clive Evatt, a Sydney gallery director, attacking Bromfield and defending the National Gallery. You will remember doing some work on art galleries in Course HP01b, *Traditions*, where you encountered Bourdieu's ideas on their social functions. Here we shall be concerned not so much with the gallery's relation to the wider society, but with the processes of definition and classification that take place inside the world of the art gallery.

The following group of readings contains excerpts from all three weeks of debate, in chronological order. The first passage (reading 3) is from McCaughey's description of the separate Australian collection. The second (reading 4)

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is a journalist's account of the Gallery director, James Mollison's, acquisitions policy; the third (reading 5) is from Bromfield's attack on the Gallery; and the fourth (reading 6) from Evatt's attack on Bromfield. Note that readings 3 and 4, although they both come from the original magazine supplement, do not in themselves represent the view which Bromfield later attacked. They have been included to introduce features of the Gallery not mentioned by Bromfield. All you really need to know to understand the Bromfield piece is that the National Gallery contains modern American and European paintings and sculpture, some older European paintings, Australian paintings and some primitive art.

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Now read the following:

P. McCaughey, *National Times Colour Magazine* (excerpts), reading 3.

P. McCarthy, *National Times Colour Magazine* (excerpt), reading 4.

D. Bromfield, 'Never mind the quality' (excerpts), reading 5.

C.A. Evatt, 'Letter to the editor' (excerpts), reading 6.

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We are now in a position to analyse the debate in terms of the categories employed in our previous discussion of the working of a normative tradition. The obvious first question to ask is: 'What is the normative artistic tradition at issue in this debate?' The answer to the question is simple enough on one level: it is the tradition according to the New York School (see reading 5, pp. 2-3). This does not mean the tradition of the New York School, which would usually refer only to the artists of that school - Pollock, Rothko, etc. It means rather the whole history of art as seen from the viewpoint of the New York School (just as Leavis's notion of 'the tradition' finally means the history of the whole of English literature as seen from the *Scrutiny* point of view). On another level, though, the answer to the question is not simple, because in neither the 'official' Gallery view, as represented by McCaughey, nor Evatt's view (reading 6) is there any admission that any such normative tradition is operating. Both acknowledge the existence of the New York School as a formal tradition (though Evatt insists that it cannot be seen as a unified entity), but neither admits for a moment that the version of world art presented in the Gallery is normatively influenced by the New York perspective. This should be recognised as a classic characteristic of the normative cultural tradition: it is only visible to those who oppose it. To those who identify with it, the tradition is indistinguishable from 'the truth'.

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We can now consider the three operations we proposed earlier - selection, connection and interpretation - in the context of Bromfield's critique of the Gallery's normative tradition.

2.4.1 Application of the model

Selection. The activity of inclusion and exclusion - the production of a 'canonical' group of works - is not an explicit target of Bromfield's critique. What 'selection' amounts to in this context is, first, acquisitions policy, and, second, the choice of works for display. The amount of choice available at the second stage was very limited (the holdings don't exceed the exhibits by much). However, for the prior stage of acquisition (i.e., purchase) it would be possible, on the basis of Mollison's statement of objectives (reading 4) to make a criticism very much in keeping with those Bromfield makes of other aspects. (This will be picked up in the next group of SAQs.)

Connection. It is with the connective operation that Bromfield is most preoccupied. In this context it takes the form, largely, of physically arranging works in such a way as to create what Williams called an illusion of 'predisposed continuity', linking the artistic past with the present and thus implicitly ratifying the present order. Bromfield's main example of this connecting operation is the physically sequential relationship which is set up between Monet's painting of waterlilies and the modern abstractions of Rothko and Pollock. (Re-read the passage, 'The story can still be told ... to force you to see things "this way"', reading 5, pp. 3-4.) Note the strict parallel between the ordering of items in the Gallery and the writing of cultural history. Bromfield makes it explicit when he compares walking through the Gallery to 'turning the pages of a cheap American paperback art history'. The parallel holds despite the fact that one activity involves language, the other merely spatial relations.

Interpretation. The way of 'reading' individual items also becomes a subject of dispute. Here Bromfield's attack is directed not at the physical features of the Gallery, but at the 'official' descriptions of particular paintings, which reinforce, and are reinforced by, the connective operation performed by the spatial arrangements and their accompanying commentary. Bromfield quotes three examples of 'misreadings' of particular paintings in terms derived from 'the New York perspective': the first is the comment on Monet's waterlily painting (the paragraph '"Claude Monet's late painting ... magnificent centrepiece"', reading 5, p.4); here the relationship between interpretation (the mode of reading) and connection (the construction of history) is very close indeed - in fact, they are hardly separable. According to Bromfield, the imposed notion of a historical progression from Monet to Pollock inevitably tends to obliterate what he regards as fundamental differences between the two paintings, considered in their own right.

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The general category of 'abstraction' is made to cover both by McCaughey's historical scheme, and this glosses over the difference between a 'meditative' and an 'assertive' use of similarly abstract techniques.

The second alleged 'misreading' (and consequent misevaluation) is of Matisse's painting 'Europa and the Bull'. Here the distorting effect of the 'New York perspective' is registered in a slightly different way. Bromfield freely acknowledges the influence of Matisse on New York painting, but insists that this influence was exercised through certain specific channels (a particular painting, a particular intermediary painter). McCaughey, in Bromfield's view has generalised the influence of Matisse's work as a whole on the New York School, so that when confronted with a quite different work by Matisse he both fails to note how it differs from Matisse's other work, and consequently overvalues it. The third 'misreading' involves the Renaissance painting by Giovanni di Paolo. Here the effect of the 'New York perspective' is much more indirect. In one sense, Bromfield's objection may seem quite unconnected with the normative art history we have been discussing: he is simply objecting to the 'cult of the masterpiece' by which a painting must be claimed as a masterpiece to be deemed worthy of attention. The connection with the 'New York perspective' is that, as with the inferior Matisse painting, 'historical significance' is used as a substitute for the inherent quality to claim the viewer's attention - and the two criteria get confused.

Note that in each case, but most explicitly in this last instance ('Even poor Giovanni ...' etc.), Bromfield is attacking what we might call 'formalism' in art criticism, that is, a preoccupation with abstract formal features such as line and colour at the expense of emotional and psychological effects. His own 'correct' readings of the Monet and the Matisse paintings are made very much in terms of the emotional/psychological states of the artist which the works communicate to the sensitive viewer. Notice that this alternative mode of reading is directly translated (in the Matisse passage) into an alternative evaluation of the work. (There is perhaps some inconsistency in Bromfield's retention of the category of absolute value, given his objections to the cult of the 'masterpiece'.)

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SAQ 4

1. In general terms, how would Bromfield prefer to see the European and American paintings in the Gallery hung? (You will have to make some inferences here; he does not make this quite explicit.)
   What effect would this be intended to have on the viewer's impressions about the history of art?

2. Re-read reading 4 carefully. How could you extend Bromfield's critique of the connective and interpretative operations to the selective operation performed by McCulloch's acquisitions policy?

3. How cogent is Clive Evatt's rejoinder to Bromfield (reading 6)? What replies might Bromfield have made, had there been a further stage in the debate?

Re-read reading 3, the semi-official description of the Australian collection. McCaughey's emphasis throughout is on the way the Gallery's presentation of the 'story' of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Australian art forces the viewer to see individual artists and schools in new ways. What we might consider is whether the 'story' of Australian art, as 'told' by the Gallery's presentation, is that of a single normative tradition, like the story of European and American art (in Bromfield's account). Notice that Bromfield is quite happy with the Australian section.

SAQ 5

1. Can you think of three ways in which, by McCaughey's account, the Gallery's presentation of the history of Australian art differs from its presentation of European art?

2. What parallels do you see between the revised view of the 'bush painters' of the Heidelberg School of the 1890s and revised views about the 'bush writers' in Sydney in the same decade? (Refer to Course HP02a, *The Bush Mythology*, section 4.)

2.4.2 Summary

This examination of the National Gallery debate has, we hope, shown how the abstract features of normative cultural traditions - literary or artistic - may manifest themselves in concrete social situations, such as the physical organisation of space in the National Gallery. Two general

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points about such traditions emerge very clearly from this particular debate. First, that, despite the analytically convenient separation we have maintained among the three operations of a normative tradition, it is often the relationships among them that are particularly striking - the mutually supportive functions of connection and interpretation, for example - and that give the tradition much of its normative power. Second, we can note the constant presence in a complex culture of conflict, of elements of resistance to orthodoxy, which are themselves the seeds of alternative orthodoxies.

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TUTORIAL ONE

This will be chiefly concerned with elucidating problems encountered in the first two sections of the course. We shall be looking at both the 'theoretical model' of a literary tradition and the National Gallery debate. (If you will be attending, you should prepare some responses to SAQs 3, 4 and 5 as a basis for this.)

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3 THE EMERGENCE OF 'AUSTRALIAN LITERATURE', PART 1

We are now in a position to return to that deceptively simple question that was posed in the preliminary exercise, namely, 'What is Australian literature?' What makes the question considerably more complex than it might first appear is that it contains not one, but two highly problematical terms: 'Australian' and 'literature'. In electing to classify an item as a piece of Australian literature, we have to determine both its 'Australian-ness' and its 'literariness' - and both of these qualities, as you know from Courses HP01a, *Defining Australia*, and HP03b, *Authorship*, respectively, are defined rather differently at different times and places.

In general, of course, single individuals tend not to make decisions on these issues - not decisions that count, at any rate; they are made collectively, over time, within the various institutions and formations of a given society and culture; in this case, those of Australian society and culture. In this section we shall be using the theoretical model devised in the preceding chapter to analyse the ways in which 'Australian literature' has been defined and used in three important social contexts: the schools, the universities (both of these are cultural institutions), and the intelligentsia, particularly the cultural formations grouped around certain literary periodicals and journals of cultural comment.

These three contexts - what we may call 'defining contexts' - of schools, the intelligentsia and the universities are not hermetically sealed social environments. As you would realise, from work done in Course HP04a, *Cultural Formations*, and elsewhere, all sorts of connections - personal, structural and ideological - exist between different institutions and formations within a given hegemonic situation. It is nonetheless possible to examine each context separately and in turn, and to emphasise, by doing that, the diverse and at times contentious range of definitions and uses of Australian literature that have, historically, emerged. Some of the readings you will encounter in this and subsequent sections are actual debates, and this accurately reflects the constant presence of potential resistances to orthodoxy within a situation of effective cultural domination. (The debate format can also, however, tend to exaggerate the real possibility of effective counter-moves and counter-definitions within such a situation.)

3.1 Australian literature in schools

The place of Australian literature in primary and secondary school curricula has varied considerably from colonial times to the present day. Indeed, we could find many different uses and definitions operating not only at different times within the last hundred years or so, but in different places at the same time, and even at different levels within the

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one school system. It is therefore unlikely that useful generalisations could be made on the matter in the space available, and it is not the purpose of this section to do so. Rather, we shall restrict our attention to a few fairly limited and specific historical instances of the schools' handling of Australian literature, with the purpose of illustrating the general processes of selection, connection and interpretation.

3.1.1 The canon in schools at the turn of the century

In a number of earlier courses, you have encountered references to school curricula as manifestations or expressions of prevailing social values. Since education - primary education at least - has been compulsory in Australia from the late nineteenth century on, the curriculum has been in a position to be an active transmitter of dominant values, attitudes and assumptions. Our focus here will be, first, upon the process of selection by means of which particular writings have been chosen for inclusion in school curricula as 'Australian literature'.

In order to understand the place of Australian literature in school curricula at any period, it is necessary also to consider the place of literature in society more generally. Reading 7 takes up both these questions in the course of a fairly extended analysis of school texts in the New South Wales primary schools around the turn of the century. The article, by S.G. Firth, is rather long, as it deals with both government and Catholic schools, and with a wide variety of textbooks, not just literary ones. The main reason for our retaining a lot of apparently extraneous information about history, geography and music textbooks as well as literature is precisely that it is not extraneous, because the relationship between 'literary' and 'non-literary' materials in school syllabi is itself a quite important factor in determining what literary texts would be selected.

Firth begins by providing a particular historical context for his investigation, namely, the impact of the New Education in Australia. The 'New Education' was the name given to a wave of progressive educational thinking which originated in Europe and Britain in the latter half of the nineteenth century; one of its foremost representatives was Matthew Arnold (himself a school inspector) whose exalted view of culture you encountered in the preceding course. The New Education insisted that 'character-building' was the proper aim of schooling, in opposition to older, more narrowly utilitarian aims. Under the older system, for example, literary works figured either as mere tools for reading practice or as mines of examples for parsing and grammar; the new system, as Firth goes on to say, used literature to inculcate moral and social values. Hence it was inevitable that a normative tradition, a canon of sorts, should emerge; but the situation was, as you will see, a bit more complicated than that.

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Before you begin reading, it may help to have some idea of the general shape of Firth's discussion. His starting point is the claim that, despite the changes made in 1904-5 to such things as teaching methods, inspection and administration, the social and moral values taught remained constant throughout the period 1870 to 1914. He illustrates this claim by citing evidence from four main sources: a series of history and geography textbooks written by S.H. Smith; a 'supplementary reader' for use in schools, called the *Commonwealth School Paper*; the Catholic school readers; and the public school readers used in New South Wales in this period. The last two sources are used in a comparison of the values taught in state and Catholic schools.

Our primary concern is not, as Firth's is, with identifying the values themselves, so much as with noting the effects their presence had on the process of selecting a canon of Australian literature. You should therefore read most of the article fairly quickly; skim the introductory section (pp.1-3), and don't spend a lot of time on the general history and geography materials. But pay close attention to the comments on literature in general (pp.6-7) and on Australian history and literature (pp.12-14).

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Now read S.G. Firth, 'Social values in the New South Wales primary school, 1880-1914', reading 7, and answer the questions that follow.

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SAQ 6

1. What general educational purposes were served by reading works of literature in the N.S.W. syllabus at the turn of the century? How did these differ from those served by reading history?

2. Why were the nationalist writers of the 1890s mainly excluded from the *Commonwealth School Paper*? What Australian writers figured most prominently in the *CSP*, and what qualities did they have in common?

3. Write a sentence explaining the difference between Catholic and public school attitudes on each of the following subjects:

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SAQ 6 (continued)

(a) The British Empire

(b) Australian nationalism

(c) The Aborigines

4. What evidence does Firth cite for the presence of an oppositional selection of Australian literature within the N.S.W. school system?

Three major points should be derived from the Firth reading which bear upon the production of a selective canon of Australian literature. They are that, within this particular social and institutional context:

1. The selection process was largely unconditioned by any notion of literature as a special category, different from historical or ethical writing. This meant that in the absence of specifically 'literary' or 'aesthetic' criteria, selection was determined by the presence of 'appropriate' social, moral and political sentiments.

2. The selection process was conditioned to a limited extent only by notions of 'nationality'. Although the special category of 'Australian literature' was acknowledged, emphasis was placed on continuities rather than differences between Australian literature on the one hand, and English and American literature on the other. Accordingly, works of a strongly nationalistic flavour were generally excluded.

3. While a particular selection, and by implication a particular definition, of Australian literature was clearly dominant, different selections and implicit definitions did exist, within the same institutional context. These could be seen as, broadly speaking, either oppositional to the dominant selection (the 'nationalists') or merely alternative to it (the Catholic readers). Refer to Course HP04a, *Cultural Formations*, section 4.1.2 for some discussion of Raymond Williams's terms dominant, oppositional, alternative.

3.1.2 Literary history and criticism in schools at the turn of the century

What we have been able to observe, in a particular social context, is the first operation - selection - of the threefold process by which 'Australian literature' is defined. The second and third operations - connection and interpretation - are also present, though not in their

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'classic' later guises, respectively, of literary history and literary criticism. In a context in which literature as such was accorded no special autonomous status, both 'connection' and 'interpretation' were not operations of a purely literary kind.

The next reading, J.B. Hirst's essay on the 'pioneer legend', illustrates both operations in roughly the same social and historical context as that delineated by Firth. Hirst's main interest is in what we would now call the 'connecting' operation by which the historical dimension of a normative literary tradition is elaborated. From our perspective, his essay describes a network of historical continuities, real and invented, which corresponds closely to the Australian literary canon enshrined in school curricula at the turn of the century. The values and attitudes underlying both the canon and its historical support structure, the 'pioneer legend', are those of the dominant class in Australian society at that time.

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Now read J.B. Hirst, 'The pioneer legend', reading 8.

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SAQ 7

1. Describe and explain the 'pioneer' attitude towards each of the following, comparing it in each case with the attitude implied in the 'bush legend' described by Ward, Phillips and others.

   (a) The convicts
   (b) The squatters
   (c) The Aborigines
   (d) Women
   (e) The bush

2. What event in Australian history does the 'pioneer legend' take as the beginning of Australian national self-awareness? Why?

3. What living Australian writers have perpetuated the 'pioneer legend'? What writers have written in active opposition to it? Write a sentence explaining the grounds of the critique offered by the latter.

Notice that Hirst several times sets up the 'pioneer legend' in explicit contrast to the 'bush legend' described by Russel Ward. Part of what Hirst is suggesting is that the two 'legends' coexisted side by side, and that Ward and others should recognise the diversity of 'bush literature' at this time. But he is also suggesting, more

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contentiously, that some of the work of 'nationalist' writers like Lawson and Paterson actually embodied the 'pioneer' rather than the 'bush' legend. This immediately raises the question of reading or, in our terms, 'interpreting' individual literary works. In the relatively unsophisticated cultural milieux we have been concerned with so far, the 'interpretation' operation was often a matter of silent departmental editing rather than critical discussion of individual texts. An example of this is mentioned by Hirst on p.7 where he refers to the 'de-radicalising' of Paterson's 'Song of the Future' in anthologies and school readers, by the simple omission of the last section which urges (radically enough) that the land be thrown open to all.

3.1.3 The canon in contemporary Queensland schools

Our second historical instance of Australian literature in the school system is much closer to home: the teaching of English in Queensland secondary schools. The kind of evidence to be used in developing this example is (of necessity) different from that used for the preceding one: it is primary rather than secondary evidence - documents such as syllabi, book lists, commercially produced 'notes', and letters to newspapers. From these we shall be attempting to infer answers to the sorts of questions we raised in relation to the turn-of-the-century school system, and to arrive at conclusions to compare and contrast with those we arrived at, on the basis of secondary materials, for the earlier context.

We shall deal first with the question of selection: what canon of Australian literature is used in Queensland secondary schools? The question cannot be easily answered because contemporary Queensland schools, unlike those in New South Wales in 1900, have an 'open' booklist, in the sense that the choice of literary texts for study is now the responsibility of the individual schools; until about ten years ago the 'prescribed' texts were designated for the whole state by the Department of Education. The degree of real diversity provided for by the present system is perhaps less than it might appear. The subject teachers who make the choices in most cases have undergone similar literary trainings, which include exposure to the same canon of Australian literature. Also, the pooling of resources, through the English Teachers' Association and other support groups, tends to discourage teachers from using eccentric booklists that would isolate them. Some idea of a 'standard' list of books for study may be gained by looking at the *Handbook of External Examination Requirements for 1982* published by the Board of Secondary School Studies. This contains the formal requirements, including set books, for both the Junior and Senior Examinations. The status of the set booklists is clear enough as far as external students are concerned; in relation to the much larger full-time student population it is more ambiguous, in that, while the lists have no direct bearing upon the choice of

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actual texts, it is fairly certain that the same narrow categories of texts - a Shakespeare play, some modern British and American plays, a 'classic' English novel, an Australian novel, and so on - would be present in most twelfth-grade booklists throughout the state. The next reading sets out the 'requirements for the study of literature' for the External Senior Examination, 1982.

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Read Queensland Board of Secondary School Studies, *Handbook of External Examination Requirements for 1982* (excerpt), reading 9.

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SAQ 8

1. Compare the national composition of this booklist (i.e., the relative proportions or relative weighting of English, American, Australian and other writing) with that of the N.S.W. primary schools in 1900. How would you account for the degree of continuity between the lists in this respect?

2. In 1900 the genres of literary works (i.e., whether they are novels, poems or plays) were apparently disregarded, whereas in 1982 the genres (or generic categories) of works are made quite explicit in the manner of presentation. How would you account for these differences? What evidence is there in the 1982 list of a departure from generic categories?

3. Give a reason for the amendment to paragraph 1(b) for the 1983 exam. What effects might this amendment be expected to have, if any, upon

   (a) students' perception of the importance of Australian literature in relation to other national literatures

   (b) students' awareness of Australian literature as a selective canon

   (c) students' awareness of different canons of Australian literature? (You may wish to reconsider (c) after having finished sections 3 and 4 of the study guide.)

What we cannot help but notice, in looking at the preceding list of set texts, is that the literary canon which seems to be operative in Queensland secondary schools now is much more 'colonial' in composition than we might have expected, given the changes in political consciousness that have

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occurred since 1900, when the colonialism of the school canon reflected fairly directly the dominant political attitudes of the time. At least at the level of what books are selected for study as 'literature', the 'cultural cringe' described by A.A. Phillips (Course HP01a, *Defining Australia*) is still with us in the schools. We should not, however, make premature assumptions about the political effects of this situation. It is not at all clear, for example, that the mere presence of British and American literary texts, in greater numbers than Australian texts, on school booklists necessarily reflects or contributes to a process of cultural colonisation - though, to be fair, it is also not clear that it doesn't do this. What is clear is that in either case the social and political effects of the texts which are selected will be very largely determined by what is done with them in the classroom, that is, by how they are studied. Not surprisingly, there is a great deal of information available on this question of how books should be studied, but we shall only be concerned with what is relevant to our main concern, namely, the process by which a particular version of Australian literature is defined. The operations involved in this process are, of course, in our terms, those of connection and interpretation.

3.1.4 Literary history and criticism in contemporary Queensland schools

The connective and interpretative operations at work in this institutional context must be discussed together rather than separately, and for a rather surprising reason. It is not simply that the two are interdependent - as we've said, they nearly always are - but that the particular character of one of them - interpretation - has to all intents and purposes banished the other (connection) from the scene. In other words, the kind of literary studies advocated and practised in schools for the last several years has tended to make the history of literature increasingly irrelevant. To understand why this is so we need to consider briefly the general aims of literary study at this level, as these have been stated in official documents.

The External Senior Examination for 1982 is based on the 1977 *Syllabus in English, Years 8-12*. The next two readings are passages taken directly from this document: the first (reading 10) is the opening general statement of the aims of secondary school English courses.

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Read Queensland Board of Secondary School Studies, *Syllabus in English, Years 8-12* (excerpt), reading 10.

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As you are probably aware, activities related to literature form only a small part of the secondary school

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English syllabus, and the five aims stated in the previous reading apply to the syllabus as a whole. Literary texts are recommended for use in fulfilling only two (2 and 5) of the five aims, chiefly of no.2. Each of the general aims is developed as a series of specific goals and recommendations, with an accompanying commentary, in a separate section of the syllabus. The next reading (reading 11) is an excerpt from the commentary attached to the second section, which is an elaboration of aim no. 2 in the previous reading.

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Read Queensland Board of Secondary School Studies, *Syllabus in English, Years 8-12* (excerpt), reading 11.

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SAQ 9

1. What benefits are students supposed to derive from literature in the 1977 syllabus? Compare these with the benefits derived in the 1904 syllabus described by Firth in the earlier reading.

2. What similarities can you see between the view implicit in this commentary and Bromfield's explicit view in the National Gallery debate, as to the main value of aesthetic experience?

3. Using the comparison with Bromfield as a guide, explain in one or two sentences why the emphasis on literature as an extension of individual experience might tend to make the historical dimension of literature irrelevant.

4. Explain, again in one or two sentences, why that same emphasis might tend to make the national dimension of literature irrelevant.

The approach to English teaching which is represented in the 1977 syllabus is commonly called the 'personal growth model'. This term first appeared in a book which is widely used in teacher-training institutions, in Queensland and elsewhere, called *Growth Through English*, by John Dixon. Dixon distinguishes three historically dominant models of English teaching in Britain and the United States.

> ... The first centred on skills: it fitted an era when initial literacy was the prime demand. The second stressed the cultural heritage, the need for a civilizing and socially unifying content. The third (and current) model focuses on personal growth: on the need to re-examine the learning processes and the meaning to the individual of what

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he is doing in English lessons. (Dixon, 1975, pp.1-2)

We might suggest, in passing, that Dixon's historical scheme seems to fit the Australian context well enough, with the New Education described by Firth corresponding to a 'cultural heritage' model, succeeding (in theory, if not in practice) an earlier 'skills' model. Our present concern, however, is with the 'growth' model and its effects on the definition of Australian literature.

We can exemplify some of the critical procedures used in the study of single works - those procedures which together form the interpretative operation of a normative tradition - by looking at a published book of notes on *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith*. This is one of a commercial series, *Brodie's Notes*, which, although they have no recognised status in the syllabus, are widely used by both teachers and students.

The most obvious feature of the notes is their preoccupation with character. They begin with three short chapters (1-4 pages each) on the general history of race relations in Australia, the specific historical background of the 'Governor murders', and the biography of Keneally. These are followed by a long chapter 'The Book' (43 pages), divided into four subsections called 'The Plot', 'Themes', 'Checklist of Characters' and 'Style'. The longest of these (14 pages) is the character checklist, which thus carries much of the burden of commentary. Reading 12 is a character sketch of Jimmie Blacksmith as an example of the approach used in the checklist.

****

Read John Dixon, *Brodie's Notes on Thomas Keneally's 'The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith'* (excerpts), reading 12.

****

There are three closely related points to be made about this sketch and about the kind of reading it exemplifies:

1. The mere fact that the problems raised by the novel are placed in individual characters tends to deny that the problems are, to any significant degree, social or political rather than moral.

2. The preoccupation with character rests upon a naively realist assumption about literature; that is, that the 'people' in a novel are not significantly different from the people in real life, and can be understood in the same way.

3. The specific analysis of Jimmie's character insists upon the moral complexity and ambivalence of his actions. Final judgments are suggested, but the emphasis is upon understanding rather than judging, and upon

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understanding in terms of the particular situation depicted by the novel. Or, to put it negatively, it insulates the actions represented in the novel from the application of general principles and values.

Many, perhaps all, of these assumptions and emphases will no doubt seem unobjectionable enough, and it is not our purpose to suggest that they are necessarily wrong. What you should notice, however, is that none of them is inevitable - there are alternative assumptions and emphases possible at each point - and that all of them, in different ways, have the effect of making the novel function not as a medium for knowledge (e.g. about Australian history or Aboriginal society) or as a medium for teaching prescribed social and moral values, but as a means of extending the reader's individual experience of life. The novel, in other words, is individualised, 'real-ised' (made real), and insulated, and in these ways made accessible as supplementary 'life experience'.

A parallel example of this critical approach is to be found in the treatment of 'style' (reading 13). You will recognise, in these general observations on the novelist's 'creative miracle', the powerful presence of the received image of authorship you examined in Course HP03b, *Authorship*. What you should also notice is the way in which it works to reinforce the effects of the preoccupation with character.

****

Read John Dixon, *Brodie's Notes on Thomas Keneally's 'The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith'* (excerpts), reading 13.

****

SAQ 10

Underline and number (1 to 3) the particular phrases in the reading that seem to you to correspond to the three effects mentioned earlier (individualising, real-ising, insulating).

Notice, finally, that the passage on style tends to make language itself, not only the actions and states of mind it signifies, an object of direct experience. In this way, the use of the novel as 'life experience' is given a whole extra dimension, since language is itself a part of life. We should notice, however, a limiting factor on this extension of experience to language, and that is the 'naive realism' which characterises the general approach to literary texts (see point 2 above). Language cannot be thought of too much as an experience in its own right if its primary function in the novel is to convey characters and events in

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as lifelike a way as possible. What the notion of 'language as experience' can provide, however, is a way of coping with the many rather isolated pieces of self-consciously 'fine writing' that occur in the novel.

3.1.5 Recent indications and future directions

We have now virtually concluded our examination of the Queensland secondary school syllabus as a defining context for Australian literature. We have looked at the selection of texts, and at the way in which, in principle, the connective operation tends to be cancelled out by the 'experiential' focus of interpretation. We could now add that, as far as the literary canon is concerned, the curricular emphasis on literature as a source of life experience has had a similar effect. If booklists appear to perpetuate a 'cultural cringe', it is perhaps partly because, from the point of view of individual life enhancement, one intense literary experience is as good as another: nationality is relevant only insofar as it is thought to modify the value of the experience - which it may do negatively as well as positively.

There is a further point to be made, however, about literature in the Queensland school system, and that is that as well as being worked upon by the system itself, it is worked upon in a very different way by elements outside the system. And there are some very recent indications that these hitherto marginal viewpoints are becoming more central.

In 1978, *The Chant* was one of several books in use in secondary schools which were targeted for attack by conservative organisations of concerned citizens. The ultimate effectiveness of the campaign was ambiguous at the time. The book was said to have been 'taken off the list', but since no list of set books existed, except one compiled by the organisations themselves, it was never clear what this amounted to in terms of preventing the book from being studied.

In any case, the basis of the attacks, rather than their success or failure, is the point of interest. Letters to the Brisbane *Telegraph* indicated a consistent set of assumptions about literature very different from those operating in the 1977 syllabus.

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Read 'Letters to the Brisbane *Telegraph*' (excerpts), reading 14.

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SAQ 11

1. How do the letter writers differ from the 1977 syllabus writers on the question: how does literature affect the conduct of readers?

2. How do the two groups differ over the value placed on the experience of literature?

3. What parallels, if any, could be drawn between the letter writers and the N.S.W. primary schools in 1900, with reference to their assumptions about literature?

Future developments in the Queensland education system will probably be determined by the new R.O.S.B.A. (Review of School-Based Assessment) scheme, a partial revision of the Radford Scheme, which was until recently being phased into Queensland secondary schools. Most subjects, including English, have already had their syllabi redrafted according to the new R.O.S.B.A. criteria. (The state government, however, moved in early 1983 to shelve further implementation of the scheme for an unspecified period.)

What are the new R.O.S.B.A. criteria, and how might they change the way in which Australian literature is used in schools? The final reading in this section is an excerpt from an official summary of the main recommendations of the Scott Committee, whose report, first tabled in 1978, forms the basis for R.O.S.B.A. It comes from the section entitled 'The nature of the curriculum'.

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Read Queensland Board of Secondary School Studies, 'Summary of a *Review of School-Based Assessment in Queensland Secondary Schools*' (excerpt), reading 15.

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SAQ 12

1. How does the Scott Committee's statement of the aims of the core curriculum compare with the general aims of English courses in the 1977 syllabus? Organise your comparison around any <u>three</u> of the following concepts.

   (a) Experience
   (b) Understanding
   (c) Fundamental values
   (d) Models of conduct
   (e) Relevancy
   (f) Community
   (g) Maturity

2. What similarities, if any, can you find between the views of the Scott Committee and those of the *Telegraph* correspondents quoted in the previous reading?

The social and political significance of the R.O.S.B.A. changes are not yet clear, but it is possible to see in the Draft Senior Syllabus in English (1982) clear evidence of a shift towards <u>language skills</u> and <u>knowledge about language</u>, and a corresponding move away from 'affective objectives' which promote 'experience' as a value. Of the six 'affective objectives' listed in the draft syllabus, three have to do with the 'satisfaction' of achieving language skills, and the other three, which are printed below, <u>can</u> be read as having to do mainly with classroom discipline!

<u>Affective objectives</u>

The student:

1. assumes increasing responsibility for the collaborative planning of learning

2. shows increasing commitment to maintaining and developing the supportive environment of learning

3. values the opinions of others and is prepared to listen and respond appropriately.

If literature is indeed, as these moves suggest, going to be used more in the future as an instrument for inculcating dominant social values, it may well signal an increase in the Australian content of set booklists in schools. Why should this occur? Mainly because, as we saw in the Scott Committee's statement on the 'core curriculum', the social and moral values to be taught are said to be those of 'the Australian community'. In other words, the new emphasis on teaching <u>values</u> is backed up by an appeal to nationalism,

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and this finds its most natural expression in an emphasis on the 'national literature'.

A problem facing those who set out to compile the new booklists - which did not face their nineteenth-century counterparts - is the difficulty they may have in finding appropriate contemporary Australian texts, since contemporary writing tends to be more uniformly 'transgressive' or 'oppositional' in its relation to the dominant social order than in the nineteenth century. A final speculation in which we might indulge, by way of a conclusion to this section, is that the film of 'The Man from Snowy River' (which was strongly recommended for school audiences) may be the first of many such attempts to reintroduce the bush literature of the '90s into the school canon, as an instrument for inculcating a set of social values not very different from those being purveyed through literature at the turn of the century - essentially those of the 'pioneer tradition'.

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4 THE EMERGENCE OF 'AUSTRALIAN LITERATURE', PART 2

4.1 Australian literature and the intelligentsia

In this section we shall be tracing the development of a different tradition of Australian literature in a different social context from that of the school system. We shall call this context 'the literary intelligentsia' and the tradition that came into being within it the 'radical nationalist' tradition. Each of these terms requires some explanation here, if only by way of recalling and supplementing the quite extended discussion of the intelligentsia in Course HP01a, *Defining Australia*, section 6.2, and giving it a specifically literary focus.

4.1.1 The meaning of 'intelligentsia'

The word 'intelligentsia' is an early twentieth-century borrowing from Russian, and it is commonly used to designate 'intellectuals' as a distinct group or class within society. Note that the very use of the term assumes as a 'given' what is often quite debatable in particular societies, namely, that intellectuals exist as a coherent social grouping. Modern debates about the role of intellectuals tend to take this for granted, and to concern themselves rather with questions about the nature of the grouping - whether the intelligentsia can be regarded as a class or some other kind of group - and about its relationship to the dominant social order - whether autonomous (that is, independent and potentially critical of the social order), incorporated (that is, an integral part of the social order, and disposed to defend it), or relatively autonomous (somewhere in between). These are important and interesting questions, and you might notice that in two earlier courses you have encountered views on the relationship of intellectuals to the dominant social order which correspond to both ends of the spectrum: from Richard White's view of the Australian intelligentsia as largely incorporated producers of dominant ideology (Course HP01a, *Defining Australia*), to F.R. Leavis's idealised conception of an 'educated public' (Course HP04a, *Cultural Formations*) which enjoys a critical autonomy in British society.

The notion of an intelligentsia as used in this course, will not be given any strict theoretical definition. We shall be treating it, in practice, as a relatively autonomous formation, partly incorporated and partly independent, but in the main it is to be regarded as an empirical category, based on the observable facts that in Australia, at least at the time we shall be concerned with, the 1930s and 1940s, much of the significant discussion of literature, especially of Australian literature, was taking place outside the formal institutions of study - the schools and universities - among novelists and poets, journalists, culture critics, historians and social commentators, as well as some academic literary critics. For this occupationally

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diverse array of people the collective terms 'literary intellectuals' and 'literary intelligentsia' will be used, but without the suggestion that, as intellectuals, they form a structural or ideological unity in Australian society.

4.1.2 Two intellectual traditions

It has been often observed, on the contrary, that Australian intellectuals have divided into different and sometimes opposed camps. A common version of this is the argument that Sydney and Melbourne are centres for two different 'intellectual traditions' (i.e., ways of thinking about society, history and culture). The most elaborate form of the 'Sydney versus Melbourne' argument is John Docker's *Australian Cultural Elites* (1974), but you can get the essentials of it by reading Geoffrey Serle's three page appendix, 'A note on Melbourne and Sydney' in your set text.

****

Now read Geoffrey Serle, *From Deserts the Prophets Come*, pp.233-36.

****

SAQ 13

Make a list of three pairs of words or phrases indicating the differences between the Sydney and Melbourne intellectual traditions as Serle describes them.

Serle's note on Sydney and Melbourne touches on the very diversified organisation of the Australian intelligentsia for much of this century; that is, its tendency to cluster around a variety of local centres of cultural activity - university departments and student clubs, political and religious associations, cultural journals, the legal profession, and even, occasionally, single individuals (Norman Lindsay, John Anderson) and single issues (conscription, Vietnam).

John Docker's elaboration of this argument, in *Australian Cultural Elites*, stresses the importance of European intellectual traditions, particularly those of Romanticism, in forming the ideas of literary intellectuals in both cities since the 1930s. Docker's own recent defence of his book contains a useful summary of its argument, which constitutes the next reading. Your work on theories of culture and Romanticism in Course HP04a, *Cultural Formations*, should make most of Docker's references comprehensible. One term that may need glossing is 'metaphysical'. Literally, it simply means 'beyond the physical', but it is used in a special sense here and in

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some later readings. In association with 'values' (para. 2) it refers to concepts like 'freedom', 'happiness', etc. considered in isolation from the social and historical dimension of human life, as qualities of existence in the abstract. A 'metaphysical realm' (para. 5) carries the notion of a sphere of existence, outside history and society, in which 'universal' values can be experienced.

****

Read John Docker, 'Sydney versus Melbourne revisited' (excerpts), reading 16. Some of the gaps in his account of the Melbourne context will be filled in a later reading.

****

Docker's emphasis on the assimilation of a European 'inheritance' of ideas by Australian intellectuals tends to assign a high degree of autonomy to the activities of the intelligentsia. To balance this view somewhat, we need to counter it with a reading that places more emphasis on political, social and economic influences on intellectual activity. The next reading does just this, within the specific historical context of the 1940s, the period when the radical nationalist tradition in Australian literature was most clearly defined and fully articulated.

You have already gained some idea of what was happening in Australia at this time from your work on White's *Inventing Australia*. Before beginning the next reading you may wish to skim the relevant section in White ('Industrialists and intellectuals', pp.148-154) to refresh your memory.

4.2 The radical nationalist canon

The next reading is an excerpt from *Australian Liberalism and National Character* (1976) by Tim Rowse. It should be read carefully, with particular attention to what Rowse has to say about the emergence of a nationalist literary canon. In terms of the model we have been using throughout the course, Rowse is talking about the selective operation within a particular literary tradition, as conditioned by a specific set of social, political and (at a further remove) economic circumstances. Note finally that 'Reconstruction', the 'New Social Order', and the 'New Order' all refer to the same thing: the projected reorganisation of Australian society after World War 2 on progressive 'welfare state' lines.

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Now read Tim Rowse, *Australian Liberalism and National Character* (excerpts), reading 17, and answer the following questions.

****

SAQ 14

1. What two major 'period' groupings of writers were selected to form the nationalist literary canon?

2. What were the main criteria for inclusion in this canon? (Consider genres and values.)

3. How did the nationalist intellectuals conceive of the relationship between literature and life?

Unless you have a very thorough knowledge of Australian literature, you will probably not have recognised many of the names listed by Rowse as 'outstanding contributors' to this tradition in the later period. This is because many of these 'social realist' novelists of the 1930s and 1940s have since been comprehensively displaced by a succeeding tradition, with a different canon, about which we shall have more to say in the next section. It is interesting to note, however, that the nationalist writers of the 1890s - Furphy, Lawson and Paterson - have not met the same fate. We shall be taking up this question somewhat later, but perhaps you could speculate about the reason for their survival. Is it primarily because their writing is in some sense more 'universal' than that of the social realists of the later period?

4.3 Radical nationalist literary history

The Australian literary tradition which, as Rowse describes it, emerged most clearly in the 1940s, has been called the radical nationalist tradition. The term is worth retaining both because of its currency, and because it does highlight the radical, or at least progressive, elements in the thinking of its chief custodians - notably, in the '40s, Vance and Nettie Palmer and Clem Christesen. John Docker provides a usefully succinct resume of their views on literature and society, and this will form the basis for considering the connective and interpretative aspects of the tradition they upheld. Read Docker's account carefully, but without expecting to understand all the terms and concepts he uses; some commentary follows. (Note: his opening reference to a 'Great Dividing Range' in Australian literary criticism will become quite clear in the next section. Ignore it for the time being.)

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Now read John Docker, 'University teaching of Australian literature' (excerpts), reading 18.

****

The first thing you should notice about this description of the radical nationalists is that it includes a number of figures whose best-known work appeared later - in some cases much later - than the 1940s. As Rowse makes clear, the era of Reconstruction was highly conducive to a progressively nationalist version of Australian culture, but when these conditions changed that version did not simply disappear. It continues to be a possible construction of Australian literary history and definition of Australian literature; and though not now the dominant one, it has had at least two champions in the last ten years or so, namely Geoffrey Serle and T. Inglis Moore (both of whom, however, were around in the 1940s).

One of the two terms in the description that may cause difficulty is 'populist'. This refers to the belief that 'the people', usually 'the common people' or 'ordinary people', are the foundation of a stable and just society. It can take - and historically it has taken - both progressive and reactionary forms.

The second troublesome term is likely to be 'historicist'. This word has accumulated a number of quite different meanings, some pejorative, some not. Docker is using it, in one of its pejorative senses, to refer to the interpretation of historical events at a particular period in terms of an all-pervading 'spirit' or 'consciousness' which is taken to be the 'essence' of the period. The 'European historicist project' to which Docker refers is, quite simply, the writing of national histories of literature. As Raymond Williams puts it,

> The idea of a 'national literature' was a historical production of great importance for a certain period. The term Nationalliteratur began in Germany in the 1780s, and histories of 'national literatures', with quite new perspectives and emphases from older and more general ideas of 'humane letters', were being written in German, French and English from the same period in which there was a major change in ideas both of 'the nation' and of 'cultural nationality'. (1981, p.53)

In Australia, the writing of national literary histories has preoccupied literary intellectuals since the nineteenth century. In this century, it has been particularly associated (though by no means exclusively, as we shall see in a later section) with critics and scholars of the radical nationalist persuasion, for whom the question of defining a distinctive set of national traits remained central. The

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next two readings are both concerned with literary historiography (by which I mean the writing of literary history). In the first, Brian Kiernan gives a useful account of its origins in Australia in the nineteenth century. The second is a sample of the thing itself, an excerpt from a national literary history of Australia written by T. Inglis Moore.

****

Read Brian Kiernan, 'Literature, history and literary history' (excerpts), reading 19, and answer the following questions.

****

SAQ 15

1. In what ways did the idea of 'American literature' shape the idea of an 'Australian literature' in the mid to late nineteenth century?

2. Explain in one sentence why literature was regarded as the chief carrier of Australian nationality.

In the next reading, T. Inglis Moore provides us with a belated, but unusually 'pure' example of radical nationalist literary historiography. The reading is an excerpt from the first chapter of his book *Social Patterns in Australian Literature* (1971). Before turning to it, some preliminary remarks need to be made. The first is that in reading the passage you should not attend too closely to the factual details; the purpose of the reading is to demonstrate a particular kind of literary-historical narrative, not to convey factual information about Australian literature. You should concentrate on recognising the concepts around which the historical narrative is organised and identifying the assumptions which are made concerning the nature of historical change.

****

Now read T. Inglis Moore, 'The social element in literature' (excerpt), reading 20.

****

The term 'Zeitgeist' with which the passage begins and ends is a German word meaning the 'spirit of the age'. It was much used by German cultural historians of the nineteenth century; indeed, the existence of a Zeitgeist is the fundamental premise of their 'historicist' form of analysis. Moore's frank adoption of such a notion in 1971, however, is disconcerting because few serious historians

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nowadays would allow it any validity as a way of describing or explaining historical change. It will nonetheless be useful to trace the form of his analysis, if only as an instructive curiosity.

On the one hand, Moore is saying that the Zeitgeist has changed markedly in Australia from age to age, and Australian literature in each age inevitably reflects these changes (para.2). On the other hand (last paragraph), the changes 'wrought by the Zeitgeist' are seen as subordinate to the overarching unity of an Australian 'national feeling' or 'ethos', which has been present in the literature of every age in varying intensities. The 'social patterns' referred to in the title are the components of this ethos: they are not, as we might expect, patterns of lived social relationships and practices, but configurations of themes, beliefs and values which are said to be distinctively Australian. (They include such things as 'The spell of the bush', 'The clash of cultures' and 'The creed of mateship'.)

Moore's historical analysis, then, can be said to be 'idealist' in the extreme, since it consists of one idealist scheme (literature as a manifestation of the Zeitgeist) superimposed upon another equally idealist scheme (literature as a continuing revelation of the national ethos). (The term 'idealism', as used here, means that ideas are held to underlie or to form all reality.) The problem with which this complicated theoretical construction tries to grapple is the awkward fact (awkward for a nationalist literary historian) that the most admired writers of the post-war period have been, as Moore puts it, 'alien to the [nationalist] literary tradition'. The highly tenuous and unconvincing quality of his solution to the problem is fairly evident in the last two paragraphs, where an 'interest in old bush songs and folk ballads' is the only evidence Moore can find of the 'dominant' nationalist tradition in the 1950s and '60s.

Moore's work is very revealing about the normative operations of literary historiography, precisely because his account fails to achieve the naturalness and conviction characteristic of a truly dominant tradition. Moore cannot make his version of literary history 'look right' because it was really, by the time he wrote it, a subordinate version, which had to be constructed to take account of a canon of preferred authors - White, Stow, McAuley and others - which had already been selected and enshrined by a dominant post-war tradition which was not the nationalist one.

What seemed a 'natural' version of Australian literary history in the '40s and early '50s seems full of arbitrary connections, strained interpretations and selective use of evidence when it reappears, in much the same form, less than twenty years later.

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SAQ 16

1. Underline the sentences that you would regard as evidence of populist tendencies in Moore's historiography.

2. How does Moore's recourse to a notion of 'the people' help to 'solve' his problem (see para.2, p.43 of this study guide) with the writers of the post World War 2 period?

4.4 Radical nationalist criticism

We have not yet spoken directly about the interpretative operation by which the radical nationalist tradition dealt with individual literary works. For the sake of completeness we shall say a word or two about it here; but the truth is that the radical nationalists' consuming interest in the connective operations of literary and cultural history was not matched by any very pronounced sense of the importance of detailed literary analysis. This was to a large extent the result of historical and institutional factors: as Docker points out, the radical nationalists were not, in general, university English department academics. They were therefore not directly affected by the new emphasis on 'close reading' of texts in British and American literary studies from about the mid-1930s. However, there were exceptions. As you will see in the next section, Arthur Phillips was well able, in 1962, to match close reading skills with the 'New Critic' Harry Heseltine.

In general, though, it is true to say that literary criticism in the radical nationalist tradition was merely 'applied' literary history. That is, it projected its historically formulated concepts of 'national character', 'national feeling' and so on directly onto individual works, using them merely as illustrations of preconceived themes, topics and values. So, for example, T. Inglis Moore, in the book we have just been discussing, examines individual works only briefly and in terms of the presence of character types, situations and topics of conversations that embody the 'social patterns' he wants to find.

When the radical nationalists did go beyond the assumptions of 'naive realism' to give some attention to the uses and effects of language in particular works, their criticism was of the intuitive, 'appreciative' type which identifies literary beauties without adequately explaining or systematically justifying the judgment. John Docker instances Nettie Palmer's comments on some lines of Christopher Brennan. He quotes from her *Modern Australian Literature, 1900-1923* (1924):

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> [Brennan's] exactness with regard to elusive ideas makes him able to express simple things when they arise:
>
> 'The quiet hour awaits the moon.'
>
> 'I am shut out of mine own heart because my love is far from me.'
>
> Such lines have the naturalness of flowers opening.

Docker himself then comments,

> Palmer simply contents herself with noting a harmony of form and content, and feels this is enough for a critical statement. The token organicist metaphor of 'naturalness of flowers opening' does away with any need to articulate in Brennan's lines a context of ideas or specific pattern of symbolism. ... Nettie Palmer may be 'acute' or 'deft' ... but her criticism remains at a very generalized level. (1974, p.99)

It was in part (and only in part) because of its weakness in the area of detailed literary analysis - the interpretative operation of the tradition - that the radical nationalist orthodoxy of the '30s, '40s and early '50s was able to be so successfully undermined by a new version of Australian literature, with a different canon, a different view of literary history and (most importantly, perhaps) a new way of analysing texts. This new tradition which, in common with Docker, Tim Rowse and other contemporary analysts, we shall be calling the 'New Critical' tradition, will be the subject of our next major section.

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TUTORIAL TWO

1. We shall be discussing the materials in sections 3 and 4. If you will be attending, you should bring along some answers to SAQs 8 to 12, and 16 by way of preparation.

2. We shall also be spending some time in general discussion of *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith*. You should bring your copy of the novel with you.

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5 THE EMERGENCE OF 'AUSTRALIAN LITERATURE', PART 3

5.1 Australian literature and the universities

We have now considered in some detail two of the three 'defining contexts' for Australian literature that we set out to examine in this major section of the course. Having looked at the schools, past and present, and at the literary intelligentsia in the inter-war and immediate post-war period, we now turn to the universities and to the Australian literary tradition that began to be defined in Australian English departments from about the mid-1950s.

To grasp what happened in Australian literary studies in this period, it is useful to think in terms of a convergence of two previously unrelated historical developments. The first is the gradual appearance of 'Australian literature' as a distinct subject in university courses. The second is the emergence, from about the same time, the mid-'50s, of a new and powerful orthodoxy in academic literary criticism, based on the work of Leavis and the American 'New Critics'. We shall examine each of these in turn, through appropriate readings.

5.1.1 Australian literature courses

The next reading is an excerpt from a long article by Bruce Bennett in which he details the slow and belated rise of Australian literature courses in Australian universities. You should regard this piece as descriptive rather than analytical and read it accordingly, that is, with an eye more to Bennett's narrative of events and summaries of other people's views than to his own interpretations and evaluative comments on the situations he describes.

****

Now read Bruce Bennett, 'Australian literature and the universities', (excerpts), reading 21.

****

SAQ 17

1. What two factors does Bennett cite as helping to perpetuate the 'colonial mentality' in the inter-war period?

2. What two cultural phenomena does Bennett associate with his first two 'phases' in the formal introduction of Australian literature courses into Australian universities?

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Two important features of the post-war situation, as Bennett describes it, should be dwelt on at somewhat greater length: the existence of a conservative and Anglophilic class of university academics in the social sciences and humanities faculties; and the *Meanjin* debate, in the early 1950s, on Australian literature courses in the universities.

5.1.2 Academic colonialism

It would be a good idea, at this point, to turn up the passage on this subject in Serle from which Bennett quotes.

****

Read Serle, pp.211-13 - from 'The educational "explosion" ...' to the end of chapter 9.

****

Both Serle and Bennett are arguing that a particular institutionalised segment of the Australian 'intelligentsia', namely university academics in certain fields including literature, have tended to act as an elite in whose interests it is to preserve Australia's cultural connections with Great Britain, emphasising the colonial nature of the relationship, and resisting attempts (usually originating from other segments of the intelligentsia, such as the radical nationalist intellectuals we looked at in section 4), to establish a strongly independent national culture. This is not the place to examine the validity of this argument in any detail. Suffice it to say that it offers one fairly plausible explanation for the protracted resistance to various national and regional initiatives in Australian universities. Other possible explanations, or types of explanation, might point to the nature of universities themselves as organisations: their involvement, on the one hand, in international groupings of various kinds (cf. your work on the international scientific 'community' in Course HP03a, *Community and Identity*); and, on the other hand, their relative inflexibility, as institutions, in comparison with the smaller and more fluid cultural formations in which the nationalist intellectuals moved. Such 'institutional' explanations certainly carry some weight, but they seem inadequate, by themselves, to account for the active and continuing resistance, in certain quarters of academia, to anti colonial directions in research and teaching.

A third type of explanation, of a broadly Marxist kind, would accentuate the determining impact of large-scale economic factors upon cultural and intellectual activity generally, and upon the activities of academics as a particular instance of this. Specifically, the cultural colonialism of the academic elite is thus explained as a reflection of the colonial status of the Australian economy in relation to British economic interests, at least until World War 2. Again, there is undoubtedly some truth in this

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analysis, and, as we saw in our earlier remarks on the intelligentsia (section 4.1.1), Richard White's discussion of the role of Australian intellectuals is a version of it. Its weakness as a total explanation lies particularly in the difficulty it has in accounting for divisions and conflicts in the intelligentsia: if some intellectuals (e.g. the radical nationalists) seem not to be supporting a particular set of colonial economic relations, this casts doubt on the broad economic explanation of the behaviour of those intellectuals (colonial academics) who do seem to be.

In general terms, the notion of an elite of university intellectuals can be regarded as a kind of compromise between the two types of analysis just discussed. It is an instance, in fact, of the 'relatively autonomous' relationship to society as a whole which we discussed briefly in 4.1.1. As an explanatory model, it allows both the institutional factors and the broader economic determinants to be taken into account, while at the same time acknowledging such further characteristics of the group as internal cohesion (i.e., a high level of personal association, even between universities), and high professional status. Some of these concepts will be taken up again, and given a more concrete set of applications, in a later part of this section.

5.1.3 The *Meanjin* debate

The Bennett reading will have given you both the historical context of the *Meanjin* debate on Australian literature courses, and a summary of the main points made by the participants. It may be useful to look, as well, at some parts of the actual exchange in order to draw out some of the assumptions and implications that Bennett doesn't mention. The next three readings, then, are excerpts from three of the five articles (not including Vincent Buckley's 1959 contribution) which made up the original exchange: those by A.D. Hope, A. Norman Jeffares and Vance Palmer.

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Read the following as a group:

A.D. Hope, 'Australian literature and the universities', reading 22.

A. Norman Jeffares, 'Australian literature and the universities' (excerpt), reading 23.

Vance Palmer, 'Australian literature and the universities' (excerpts), reading 24.

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We need to grasp this debate as a particular moment in a historical process, and it may help to do this if we can say, in fairly simple terms, what the various participants

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'stand for'. The most problematical from this point of view is Hope, the initiator of the debate, and we shall return to his piece in a moment. Jeffares represents, fairly straightforwardly, the standard university line (on which Milgate and Miller, the other two participants in the original exchange, present only minor variations). This involves serious reservations about the teaching of Australian literature (a) outside established departments of English literature and (b) to undergraduates.

SAQ 18

1. Why did Jeffares object to the study of Australian literature outside the context of English literature?

2. What relationship between literature and its social context does his objection imply?

3. Why was Jeffares unwilling to introduce undergraduate courses in Australian literature (even within the context of English literature)?

4. What does he consider an improper function for literary study, and why?

Vance Palmer's brief contribution represents the radical nationalist line on Australian literary studies, a line which was at this stage quite unacceptable to established university English departments It involved opposition to the universities' line on a number of questions, including

1. The relationship between English and Australian literature. In his second paragraph Palmer argues (more clearly and effectively than Hope, who adopts the same position) that English literature is just as specific to English national culture as Australian or other national literatures are to theirs. He makes the important further point that the 'internationalist' argument put forward by the university critics - the claim that 'all literature is one' and that Australian literature should not be studied in isolation - is actually irrelevant to the real situation in Australian universities, since English departments in practice were only teaching English literature, not world literature.

2. The relationship between literature and its social context. Palmer's proposal for departments of Australian studies (not just Australian literature, as in Hope's less radical proposal) tends to deny literature the special, autonomous status the university critics wanted to accord it, and to emphasise instead the links between literary production and other social practices.

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3. The proper function of academic literary study. Palmer's remark about 'embryo critics' sharpening their minds on fresh literary material suggests a somewhat different idea of the point of studying literature from the one we find in Jeffares's piece. For Palmer, the point is broadly educative, the more so when the literature studied is one's own national literature, whereas for Jeffares the point is primarily scientific (i.e., concerned with producing 'knowledge' about literature, chiefly in the form of 'correct' evaluations of Australian literary works). Clearly there would be no question, for Palmer, of restricting the study of Australian literature to the postgraduate level in the way Jeffares would wish to do.

We may also reasonably infer a different stance from Jeffares on the matter of the proper relationship between literary writing and criticism. Palmer makes no direct statement on this here, but it is highly unlikely, given his insistence on joining literature to a social context, and in view of his own practice as both novelist and critic, that he would wish to keep the two activities separate, or that he would have regarded with the same horror that Jeffares apparently felt, the formation of 'schools of creative writing'.

We have so far looked at two views which may be taken as opposite extremes within this debate as a whole. The piece which started it, by A.D. Hope, is much less simple and straightforward than any of the responses to it. We shall not be commenting on it at length here, partly because Bennett's commentary is in most respects satisfactory. However, you should read the piece carefully, in the light of what has been said about the other two pieces; the next SAQ will be concerned with it.

Bennett correctly observes that Hope's proposal is deeply ambivalent (p.4) and that this ambivalence has to do with his 'basic agreement' with the colonial attitudes of university English departments. It is possible to see Hope's proposal as an early move within the universities to respond to pressures for greater cultural independence, and thus to see the contradictory elements in his article as a manifestation of the conflict, unresolved at this stage, between the conservative colonialism of the academic elite and the progressive nationalism of writers and intellectuals mainly outside the universities (not entirely so, as the role of T. Inglis Moore shows). Since we have seen these opposing tendencies represented separately in Jeffares and Palmer respectively, it should not be difficult to identify them when they occur together, as internal contradictions in Hope's thinking. We shall attempt to do this in the form of an SAQ.

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SAQ 19

1. Using the terms which were introduced earlier, how would you label Hope's view of the purpose of academic literary studies?

   (a) educative
   (b) 'scientific'
   (c) both
   (d) neither

2. Concentrating on the final paragraph, indicate which elements in Hope's conclusions suggest an alignment with the 'university line' (Jeffares et al.), and which an alignment with the nationalist line (Palmer et al.).

Before leaving the subject of the *Meanjin* debate, something more needs to be said about the later contribution by Vincent Buckley, of which Bennett gives a fairly full summary. It would be reasonable to see Buckley's article as a later move in the same gradual process of accommodating Australian literature in the universities; and it possesses, in comparison with Hope's tentative proposals, a degree of confidence and cogency which suggests that significant accommodations had indeed been made in the interim. What we can note about Buckley's article, however, (even in the second-hand version Bennett gives us) is that, like Hope's, it proposes a form of accommodation which is very much a compromise between the viewpoints of radical nationalists like Palmer and Moore and those of English department academics like Jeffares and Milgate. If we look only at the quoted 'major justifications for the teaching and study of Australian literature in the universities' (p.6), we can see that the first and fourth justifications have a radical nationalist colouring, while the second and third are marked by English department assumptions about literature and literary value.

This concludes our discussion of the first of the two developments that converged in Australian universities in the 1950s, namely, the emergence of 'Australian literature' as a subject for study. In the final section of the course we shall be glancing at some of the more recent innovations in Australian literary studies at university level, but for the moment it will be enough to observe that the study of Australian literature in universities since the 1950s has proceeded, for the most part, according to the compromise formula foreshadowed by Hope and developed by Buckley: as undergraduate course electives offered within English literature degree programmes.

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5.2 The Leavisite/New Critical orthodoxy

At about the same time as courses in Australian literature were beginning to appear in Australian universities a new literary-critical orthodoxy was emerging and beginning to establish itself in the major university departments of English literature. This new approach involved a number of definite assumptions about literature, preferences among literary works, ways of studying and criticising literature, and ideas about the purpose of criticism, which were significantly (though not totally) different from those that held sway in English departments before World War 2. The new approach, which was an amalgam of British and American trends in literary criticism of the previous two decades, rapidly established itself as a critical orthodoxy, that is, a dominant way of studying and teaching literature, and while it had no particular connection with Australian literature, its mere presence, as a dominant academic approach to all literature at the time when Australian literature courses were appearing, had a marked effect on the structure and conduct of those courses.

The actual components of this new orthodoxy were, as we have mentioned, British and American critical trends of the previous twenty years or so, and this combination of 'inputs' is represented by the unwieldy term 'Leavisite/New Critical'. Each element of the composite term requires some elaboration.

You have by now heard quite a lot about F.R. Leavis, both in the earlier part of this course, and in Course HPU4a, *Cultural Formations*. It will be necessary to say a little more about him now, because it was he, more than any other single figure, whose work provided the model of literary criticism for the new academic orthodoxy in studying and teaching Australian literature. This is not to say that the other, American-connected component of the orthodoxy, which we shall be looking at in a moment, was unimportant - indeed, in one major area, the critical analysis of poetry, it was probably more important than Leavis. But it was around the figure of Leavis that the new way of dealing with Australian literature in general tended to organise itself, in both Sydney and Melbourne.

The next reading is primarily intended to give you an idea of the centrality of Leavis in the major Australian English departments from about the late 1950s onwards. It is an account of a somewhat bizarre episode in the history of the Sydney University English Department which is commonly referred to as the 'Sydney Split'. The account, which is by John Docker, is more of a personal memoir than a careful analysis, and you should read it accordingly. Don't imagine that you need to remember details such as the names of the academics and small journals Docker mentions; it is intended to be read only for general information and perhaps amusement.

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Now read John Docker, 'How I became a teenage Leavisite and lived to tell the tale' (excerpt), reading 25.

****

The main points of substance to be remembered from this account, at least for our present purposes are as follows:

1. The emphasis placed by the Leavisites on evaluation as an indispensable part of criticism; the construction of hierarchies.

2. The emphasis on the necessity for close analysis of verbal subtleties and complexities in literature. (An emphasis it shared with the New Criticism - see below.)

3. The existence of different and sometimes antagonistic factions within 'Leavisism'.

The other component of the New Critical orthodoxy was the American 'New Criticism', of which the next reading, an entry in Abrams's *Glossary of Literary Terms*, gives a useful definition and description.

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Now read Meyer Howard Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (excerpts), reading 26.

****

Having read Abrams's account you will probably perceive that there are real differences between the Leavisite and New Critical approaches. Specifically, the New Critics were (a) more rigorous in excluding non-literary contexts than Leavis and (b) less preoccupied with value judgments than Leavis. Where they come together, most obviously, is in their unqualified conviction of the value of detailed verbal analysis of individual works, and in the kinds of analytical procedures they followed. Areas of potential conflict between the two components of the new orthodoxy remained unrealised, by and large, while the more fundamental points of agreement between them were stressed. The reasons for this were at least partly ideological, as Docker suggests in the next reading when he refers to the Cold War political environment within which the new orthodoxy first emerged: when a primary function of criticism was to 'de-politicise' literature, the fact that Leavis and the New Critics might do it for slightly different reasons could seem quite unimportant.

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5.2.1 The New Critical canon

This long preamble on the Leavisite and New Critical components of the new orthodoxy of the late 1950s should enable you to understand what Docker is saying in our next reading, taken from the same article from which we earlier excerpted a short description of the radical nationalists. This reading is intended to provide two things: first, a descriptive account of the academic 'Aust.Lit.' establishment in Australian universities since the 1950s; second, a demonstration of the selective operation by which, within that establishment, a new canon of Australian literature has been formed, which has displaced that of the radical nationalists.

Two further remarks are necessary by way of introduction. When Docker uses the term 'New Critics' in the Australian context, it should be taken as shorthand for 'Leavisites/New Critics'; he is not referring exclusively to the American influence, but to the new critical orthodoxy generally. And, finally, you will notice that Docker's tone here is often heavily ironic: the New Critics as he calls them have been vigorously disparaged by him in a number of articles and reviews, and his account here is far from neutral. As long as you realise this you will be able to form your own opinions about the merits of the Australian New Critics; some later readings will present them in a more favourable light.

****

Now read John Docker, 'University teaching of Australian literature' (excerpts), reading 27.

****

SAQ 20

1. What are the two main objections (according to Docker) that the New Critics levelled at the radical nationalists' treatment of Australian literature?

2. In your own words, what are Docker's main criticisms of these objections? (Check the answer to 1. before answering 2.)

3. Apart from the exclusion of social realist writers and the inclusion of 'metaphysicals', what other process was involved in the construction of a New Critical canon of Australian literature?

The third question in the preceding set refers to the 're-reading' of authors and texts already prominent in the radical nationalist canon, in such a way as to 'discover' and

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emphasise their 'real' kinship with the literary and other values of the New Critics themselves. This process of re-reading was applied particularly to nationalist writers of the 1890s, especially Henry Lawson and Joseph Furphy. Docker's metaphor for this process of re-reading in the piece you have just read is 'harvesting a metaphysical essence' (p.2) - which is not really very informative about the literal process involved. There is a longer and more useful discussion of New Critical rereadings of the '90s in Docker's review of the Cantrell anthology *The 1890s* which you used as a text in Course HP02a, *The Bush Mythology*. According to Docker, Cantrell's Introduction is little more than a recycled version of the New Critical rereading of the nationalist writers of the '90s, which has been part of the critical orthodoxy in Australian literary studies since the late '50s.

An even better example of the re-reading process, in this case at first hand, as performed by one of the leading Australian New Critics, is provided by a famous 1962 article by H.P. Heseltine, 'The literary heritage'. This will also be used, together with the reply to it by A.A. Phillips, to illustrate the operations of connection (history) and interpretation (criticism) in maintaining what we may now call the 'New Critical' tradition of Australian literature.

5.2.2 New Critical literary history and criticism

Heseltine's article is, in fact, a review of a book of critical essays on Australian literature, *The Australian Tradition* by the radical nationalist, A.A. Phillips. But Heseltine's review can easily be read as a self-contained piece of literary historiography and criticism. He takes issue, first and foremost, with Phillips's conception (and that of others, like Palmer and Moore) of the central themes and values of Australian literature: against their conception of the 'literary heritage' (that is, in effect, the normative literary tradition) as being essentially defined by the values and themes of the bush (mateship, democracy, good-humoured fortitude, independence and so forth), he opposes a quite different conception of the essential and distinctive character of Australian literature, a deeper set of themes and preoccupations - perhaps best summed up by his phrase 'the horror of sheer existence' - for which the sociable values of the bush tradition serve as an elaborate cover. This is the central contention of Heseltine's article, and you should pay particular attention to how he supports it, both historically and critically.

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Now read H.P. Heseltine, 'The literary heritage', reading 28.

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SAQ 21

1. Why does Heseltine believe a new version of 'our literary heritage' is needed?

2. Why does the 'convict literature' of the nineteenth century take on a heightened importance in Heseltine's new version of the literary tradition?

3. Heseltine claims that the 'bush virtues' celebrated by the writers of the '90s are 'survival techniques'. Which particular bush virtues does he associate, in this way, with Furphy's *Such is Life*? With Lawson's short stories? What, according to Heseltine, are the real preoccupations of these two writers? (Be specific.)

4. What is the special importance of Christopher Brennan and Henry Handel Richardson in the new literary tradition?

One way of schematising Heseltine's argument so as to see both its strengths and weaknesses more clearly is to distinguish three groups of writers, each of which Heseltine has to treat somewhat differently in order to bring them within the boundaries of his new Nietzschean version of the literary tradition.

1. Those modern writers, like White and Stow, who directly express many of the themes and values Heseltine claims are characteristic of Australian literature as a whole. Such writers belong to the same intellectual culture as Heseltine himself and share, or have shared, a common 'fifties' vocabulary of terms and concepts (alienation, the 'horror of being', nothingness, nihilism, etc.) and a common set of interests and influences (Nietzsche, existentialism, Lionel Trilling, etc.).

2. Those earlier writers, like Brennan, Siessor and Richardson, who appear to lend themselves to critical interpretation in these sorts of terms somewhat better than in radical nationalist terms - and who had been, in varying degrees, marginalised by the radical nationalist tradition.

3. Those earlier writers, particularly Furphy and Lawson, central to the older version of the literary tradition, in whom Heseltine has to show a split between the surface level of professed values and ostensible themes and a deeper level of real values and hidden themes.

The validity of Heseltine's argument depends on his alignment of these three groups in a convincing pattern of continuity, but it depends in particular on the third group,

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the *Bulletin* writers, for whom a strongly entrenched alternative reading had existed. The notion of the bush virtues as 'survival techniques' is the key to his re-reading of these writers.

A characteristic effect of large new syntheses such as Heseltine's is that if they are skilfully and imaginatively presented it becomes difficult to extricate oneself from them. In other words, once we have accepted, even provisionally, the notion that Henry Lawson may have been an anguished, neurotic 'outsider' rather than the 'apostle of mateship' we had assumed he was, the changed perspective can become irrevocable - and for no better reason than that it is hard to hold two contradictory ideas in the mind at once.

It is therefore quite important to balance Heseltine's eloquence with the reply it elicited from A.A. Phillips, whose clearly argued disagreement might have been expected to do more to dissipate the influence of Heseltine's synthesis than in fact it did. One thing you should notice about Phillips's reply is that, by contrast with older radical nationalists like the Palmers and Moore, he is able to argue with Heseltine (and perhaps get the better of him) using his own New Critical tools of close textual analysis. What this shows is simply that the separate areas of intellectual production in Australian society are not sealed: the historical developments in literary critical techniques were available, if less directly, to those segments of the literary intelligentsia outside university English departments.

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Now read A.A. Phillips, 'The literary heritage re-assessed', reading 29. (The references to *Such is Life*, which you have probably not read, are fairly self-explanatory and should not obscure the gist of the argument.)

****

The following list of points is not intended to be a summary of the Phillips article; it is, we think, clear enough not to need one. They are fairly isolated comments intended to highlight some of the less obvious differences between Heseltine's view and Phillips's.

1. Notice that, on the subject of Furphy, Phillips does not naively oppose the author's intention and the critic's perception; he accepts the validity of Heseltine's intuition and accounts for the gap between Furphy's philosophic intention and the literary product in terms of a specific failure of craftsmanship. This willingness to engage actively, almost cooperatively, with the writer's activity of writing is quite alien to the formalism of the Leavisite/New Critics. (It is not typical, either, of the earlier radical nationalists whose <u>organic</u> notions of literary works tended to preclude 'meddling'. Compare Jeffares's horror at the

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prospect of critics advising creative writers. Phillips's attitude might well remind you of the much older, pre-Romantic (but also contemporary) attitudes to the literary work as a constructed artefact.

2. One of the most influential aspects of Heseltine's thesis is its historical dimension. It pretends to a greater sophistication by establishing historical connections with European Romanticism that had been neglected by older critics. But Phillips sets up an alternative historiography, broadly cultural rather than literary, which counters Heseltine on two points:

   (a) the artist-as-outsider is a culturally and historically specific image of the artist. (Compare Course HP03b, *Authorship*.)

   (b) the Romantic/Nietzschean preoccupation with 'primal energies' and the daimonic in life is not simply a component of Romanticism wherever it appears; it can be related historically to highly industrialised environments, of which Australia in the nineteenth century was not one.

3. Following on from 2(a) above, Phillips elaborates an informal 'sociology' of the artist-intellectual which is quite useful. His distinction between the patriotism of the Common Man and the patriotism of the Artist (or of the 'especially sensitive'), and his perception of the rivalry between them in contemporary Australian culture can be seen as a valuable counter to the unquestioned elitism of much modern Australian writing and criticism (and much of the older radical nationalist culture criticism). Phillips's position slides very easily, however, into a sentimental populism (see the third last paragraph).

5.3 An example: *The Oxford History of Australian Literature*

In this final section on the universities as a defining context for Australian literature, we shall be discussing, as a sort of summarising example, the recently published *Oxford History of Australian Literature*.

Before reading the prescribed sections of this book, certain relevant facts about it need to be mentioned. The first is that the 'Oxford History' part of the title is highly significant in itself. Oxford University is not just any publisher, and the *Oxford History of Literature* series, to which *The Oxford History of Australian Literature* is the latest addition, is not just any series. The Oxford imprimatur can be seen as a bland assertion of the importance of the British colonial connection - that 'colonial mentality' that poses as 'internationalism', as Palmer observed in the *Meanjin* exchange. It can also be seen as conferring a certain 'official' status on the

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particular version of Australian literature contained in it. As a member of the *Oxford History* series, (which includes such volumes as the *Oxford Histories of Sixteenth, Early Seventeenth, Late Seventeenth Century Literature*, and so on) it takes its place in a purely literary series. Before reading a word of the text it is apparent that Australian literature has been placed in the context of several centuries of English literature.

All of these points have as much, or more, to do with the social and political relations of certain English department academics as with the content of their literary history and criticism. The two dimensions of the *OHAL*, as a literary-historical text in its own right, and as the product of a particular academic elite, are closely intertwined.

The editor of the *OHAL*, Professor Leonie Kramer, holds the Chair of Australian Literature (the only one in Australia) at Sydney University. The other three contributors are, or were, also in the Sydney University English Department. Professor Kramer and one of the other contributors, Vivian Smith, are members of the editorial board of the conservative journal *Quadrant* and, finally, as you are probably aware, Professor Kramer was Chairman of the A.B.C. from 1981 to 1983.

The point of reciting these 'external' facts about the writers is to indicate something of the diversity of cultural, institutional and political power to which the academic elite in Australia have access. This is important to a full understanding of the dominant position of the New Critics in the Australian literary establishment. The next reading is taken from Kramer's introduction to the *Oxford History*.

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Read Leonie Kramer, 'Prefatory note and introduction' (excerpts), reading 30, and complete the SAQ on the next page.

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SAQ 22

1. What kinds of writing have been explicitly excluded from the *Oxford History*? On what grounds have they been excluded?

2. Why, in Kramer's view, is a new history of Australian literature necessary? Answer in terms of

   (a) the contemporary state of Australian writing

   (b) the faults in previous histories, which the *Oxford History* will rectify.

It is, of course, difficult and somewhat unfair to make statements about a work as large as the *Oxford History* (500 pages) on the basis of a few introductory paragraphs. All the same, the governing principles and assumptions of the *History* as a whole do emerge fairly clearly in the previous reading. But in order to expand our sample of the *History* proper, while at the same time getting a sense of the kinds of critique to which it is particularly vulnerable, we shall now look at a rather long (but quite readable) review of it by John Docker, published in the journal *Overland* shortly after the *History* first appeared.

****

Read John Docker, 'Leonie Kramer in the prison-house of criticism', reading 31.

****

Using as a basis both the excerpt from the Kramer introduction and the Docker review of the *History*, the following general points can be made about it. For convenience, we shall once more adopt the three 'traditional' operations of selection, connection and interpretation.

5.3.1 Selection

A canon of Australian literature is defined (or rather, reinforced) in the *History* chiefly by defining 'literature' itself in a very exclusive manner. It could be argued, for example, that the exclusion of 'documentary' and 'popular' writing announced in the prefatory note (p.1) is an act which defines 'the literary', whatever the pragmatic reasons cited for their omission. This is confirmed, in relation to documentary writing, by the repeated contrasts between 'literature' and the 'merely documentary'. The loaded contrast between 'the literary' and 'the documentary' slides very easily into a general condemnation of social realist

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writing, and results in the slighting or complete omission, noted by Docker, of several important writers of this type in the *History* proper.

The ideological (not merely pragmatic) grounds for excluding 'popular' literature are also clearly demonstrated by Kramer's gratuitous observation, in the prefatory note, that 'serious' writers mould opinion, whereas 'popular' ones merely reflect it. The opposition set up between 'serious' and 'popular' is itself heavily loaded against the latter, automatically identifying it with 'frivolity' (rather than with 'the people' as in Moore's *Social Patterns*).

5.3.2 Connection

The history of Australian literature offered here is distinguished by two things: the rejection of 'context' as a determining factor for literature; and the rejection of a 'growth' model of historical development, of the kind favoured by nationalist historians. (See Kiernan, reading 19.) The rejection of context as a determining factor for literature is formulated most bluntly in a passage not included in the readings where social, artistic and physical contexts are all dismissed as irrelevant. 'There is really no reason to suppose that [the colonial poets] would have written better in a different cultural environment.' Kramer's view could be described as a form of 'individualism'. Specifically, it is a version of the individualistic image of the author that you examined in Course HP03b, *Authorship*, an image in which the author is seen as creating the literary work, alone and unaided, out of the raw material of experience.

Kramer rejects the organic growth model of historical progression quite explicitly, and, although Docker claims (reading 31, p.4) that an equally progressive, developmental model is adopted in its place, this is debatable. The problem is arguably not that a developmental model of history is being used, but that the process of change is presented, no less simplistically, as an unexplained alternation between 'good' and 'bad' literature.

It might be claimed that in contrast to the idealist historiography of Vance Palmer and Inglis Moore, the New Critics' historiography, as exemplified by the *Oxford History*, is not even historical in any real sense, but merely a sequence of individual writers and works, unrelated to any larger contexts and hence unconnected by any continuities other than those of personal biography; even literary influence can scarcely be admitted, since it threatens to condition and therefore limit the supposed free agency of the individual author. As one contemporary critic, John Frow, has put it,

> [The *OHAL*] is not a history in any meaningful sense of the word. It is a collocation of normative judgments, and history is present only in the

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gestural form of dates and sequencing. (1982, p.22)

5.3.3 Interpretation

The kind of literary criticism endorsed and practised by the *Oxford History* falls into two categories, which correspond roughly to the two historical components of the label 'Leavisite/New Critics'.

First, there is an emphasis, characteristic of the New Critics, and of their individualised, creative image of the author, on the internal relations of literary works, on meaningful patterns of repetition and contrast, etc. This is particularly true of poetry criticism, and partly accounts for the greater value placed on poets like Brennan, Nielson, Slessor and Judith Wright, whose poetry lends itself to analysis in terms of image and symbol patterns. It is also true of some of their novel criticism, where the emphasis on self-contained systems of symbolic meaning - myths - in White and Stow is part of the same set of critical habits.

There is, however, a whole other direction of criticism in which the 'individualist' image of the author may lead, and that is towards finding in literature, especially novels, realistic representations of 'individuality'. Hence Martin Boyd is praised for making the investigation of character central to his fiction - and a distinction then has to be made between social realist novels, where characters are placed in collective social contexts of one kind or another, and novels of 'psychological' or 'moral' realism, which present characters either alone or in families. The critical method implicitly recommended for the latter is the mixture of amateur psychologising and arbitrary moral assertion which is characteristic of Leavis at his worst.

The proper role of criticism is implicitly defined, in the Kramer introduction, in a way that reflects the intellectual and institutional characteristics of the New Critical orthodoxy. First, criticism generally is conceived mainly in terms of evaluation; and, second, the relationship between critics and writers is made as remote as it decently can be without seeming too arrogant. Notice, for example, (second paragraph and second last paragraph) the unease expressed at the degree of cultural cooperation involved in the notion of 'encouragement of interest of Australian literature' (p.1), and at the critical 'protectionism', which is 'not necessarily generous' (p.2). (Note also the - arguably hypocritical - appeals to popular notions of national independence and self-help to support this viewpoint.) The distrust of a close relationship between creative writing and criticism can be compared with the similar distrust expressed by English department academics like Norman Jeffares, and contrasted with the opposite attitude of nationalists like Palmer and Phillips (and also,

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interestingly, Buckley, who, though a New Critic, is also a poet). It can be related to the separation of university departments from the cultural formations in which most creative writing is done (cf. the radical nationalists). It can also be related to a dominant conception of the literary work as a unique and unalterable whole, rather than the product (not the only possible one) of a set of writing practices which can be described, shared and taught.

A concrete illustration of several features of New Critical literary criticism, applied to the novel you have read for this course, can be found in a recent article on Keneally's novels by Adrian Mitchell (the author of the 'fiction' chapter of the *Oxford History*).

****

Now read Adrian Mitchell, 'Thomas Keneally and the scheme of things' (excerpts), reading 32.

****

SAQ 23

1. How does Mitchell reconcile the 'popular' elements of Keneally's fiction with the exclusive definition of literature adopted by the *Oxford History*? (Re-read the first paragraph.)

2. In what ways is Mitchell's general view of the themes of Keneally's fiction (para. 2) related to the New Critical orthodoxy?

3. In what ways does *The Chant* fail to conform to Mitchell's formula for Keneally's novels? How does Mitchell deal with this apparent deviation? (i.e., How does he prevent it from undermining the validity of his general theory?)

4. Do you agree with Mitchell's observation about the 'flattened' tone in which the massacre is narrated? If so, can you suggest any alternative explanations for it to the one Mitchell offers?

Some of the distinctions on which we have been elaborating, in this section particularly, may have seemed to you, at times, a bit fuzzy and ambiguous. This is partly because, in the area of contemporary cultural studies, the distinctions are simply not hard and fast: the labels we affix to certain tendencies and the connections or distinctions we draw between them are inevitably provisional, and quite likely to change in the near future as academic debate continues. Nonetheless, at the risk of imparting a false stability to the categories, labels and

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distinctions we have been working with, it may be helpful for you to have a diagrammatic (and hence very simplified) representation of these things to refer to. The structure of the diagram on the next page is self-explanatory. Do not regard it as a comprehensive summary but rather as a tool for revision.

By way of sharp contrast with the Mitchell reading, and as a means of providing information for use in the final section of the course, now read an article by the historian Henry Reynolds on the historical background to Keneally's novel. Only the fourth section is directly concerned with *The Chant*. You will need to read the first three sections in order to make sense of the fourth, but they may be read quickly; the fourth and final section should be read with some care.

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Now read Henry Reynolds, 'Jimmy Governor and Jimmie Blacksmith', reading 33.

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SAQ 24

Name one way in which Reynolds's treatment of the novel differs markedly from Mitchell's, and from New Critical doctrine generally.

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Topic	Radical Nationalists	New Critics
Favourite literary themes	growth of nationhood, virtues of the bush, working life, social/political issues, social optimism.	growth of the individual, city and suburbs, private life, individual morality, psychological complexity, 'metaphysical anguish'.
The canon	the bush writers of the '90s, social realists (1930s-1950s) (see Rowse, reading 17).	colonial writers (pre-1890), the 1890s re-read, the post-World War 2 'psychological' novel (see Docker, reading 27).
Literary history	contextual, populist, national, developmental (an organic conception of cultural growth).	anti-contextual, elitist, 'international' (Anglocentric), non-developmental.
Criticism	'extrinsic' (relating text to context), 'impressionistic'.	'intrinsic' (analyses internal relations of texts), morally evaluative, aesthetically evaluative.
The role of the critic	to place works in national contexts etc., to provide constructive criticism for writers' use.	to construct absolute hierarchies of literary value, to avoid giving advice to writers.
Conception of the literary work	the product of a 'material practice' of writing.	an unalterable object mysteriously created by 'art'.
The author	a man or woman engaged in a particular social activity. A spokesperson for society (see Phillips, reading 29).	a 'creative artist', separate from the rest of the community (see Phillips, reading 29).

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NEW DEFINITIONS OF 'AUSTRALIAN LITERATURE'

The general argument of this course has been that there is, at any given point in history, a dominant conception of what can be called 'Australian literature' which is determined by the effective dominance of a particular tradition of Australian literature. At the present time, that dominant tradition is the one we have been calling the 'New Critical' tradition, and it has been so since it displaced the radical nationalist tradition in the 1950s. The character of this domination is far from simple, however, and may best be described, using a term which was introduced in section 2, as hegemonic. As with all hegemonic systems, it maintains its position in a variety of ways: by the institutional prestige and the political connections of certain of its representatives; by the practical 'teachability' of its key concepts and procedures of analysis; by its general ideological 'fit' with a particular set of historical conditions. All these means, and others, have operated to ensure the New Critics' continuing custody of Australian literature. A further hegemonic feature of the New Critical orthodoxy is its ability to accommodate the presence, inside and outside the universities, of different traditions - different canons, histories and criticisms - without suffering any serious threat to its overall dominance. This dominance may, as Docker suggests in his review of the *Oxford History*, be coming to an end; and certainly there are clear signs of new departures in the field of Australian literary studies over the last five years or so. Some of these may yet be incorporated into the old New Critical hegemony; others are less likely to be. In this final section of the course, we shall consider, fairly briefly, some of the oppositional, post-New Critical directions in the study of Australian literature in the universities. These will be taken up for more detailed discussion in some of the Phase 2 courses in the programme, but it seems appropriate to offer some general observations at this point, if only because these new directions of study will inevitably produce, and may already have produced, significant changes in the definition of 'Australian literature', the process with which this course has been primarily concerned.

Before discussing any specific areas of innovation, however, it may be of interest to consider the general picture: how has Australian literature been defined and taught in Australian universities in very recent times? Our next reading addresses this question directly and provides some fairly definite, if limited, empirical answers. It is a later section of the same article by Bruce Bennett that was used earlier, and it presents Bennett's findings on the state of affairs in 1975. As you read this excerpt, bear in mind that it is the general picture, general trends, you are looking for. Don't try to remember the details.

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Now read Bruce Bennett, 'Australian literature and the universities' (excerpt), reading 34.

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SAQ 25

What specific features of the Leavisite/New Critical orthodoxy, as it has been defined in this course, are being challenged in the undergraduate teaching of Australian literature?

The relationship between academic research and undergraduate teaching is not always close, but for various reasons it is probable that in the field of Australian literature the relationship is closer than usual. It can therefore reasonably be supposed that some interplay occurs between the two, and that innovative moves in the teaching of Australian literature may reflect, or be reflected in, academic scholarship and published criticism in the field - materials which are much more accessible to scrutiny.

Innovative moves in this area may be categorised for consideration, conveniently enough for this course, into 'challenges' on three familiar levels: the canon, the history and the criticism of Australian literature. This tripartite division is not only (though it is mainly) for the sake of formal symmetry. It has the further advantage that it may, if our model of how a normative tradition works has any real validity, suggest an answer to the question of whether a new orthodoxy, a new dominant way of seeing Australian literature, is about to emerge.

6.1 Challenges to the canon

Most of the new directions in undergraduate teaching mentioned in the previous reading, and many of the explicit academic challenges to New Critical orthodoxy, have had to do with the canon. This is not surprising: the selective operation is the easiest target of the familiar trio because it is such an obvious sign of partiality, on the one hand, and so easily altered (by additions or deletions) on the other. There is some doubt, however, as to whether the mere substitution of certain texts or authors for others - on school booklists, university courses, or in literary histories, for example - is ever a significant challenge to an established tradition. The power of the connective and interpretative operations is such that changes to the canon alone, while easy to achieve in particular instances, are also very easily incorporated.

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Objections to the New Critical canon tend to take the form of objections to any canon at all. You have already encountered two instances of this line in your readings: both Docker, in the final paragraph of reading 27, and Bennett, in his comments on Vincent Buckley (reading 21), argue that canons - all canons - are exclusive and unnecessary.

However, it is not difficult to think of practical reasons why the existence of some literary canons might be inevitable, and the 'pluralism' of Bennett and Docker unrealistic.

This question is not intended to suggest that the virtual exclusion of whole areas of Australian writing, which is a characteristic of the New Critical tradition (as it was of its predecessor), is in the least desirable. It is intended only to raise the question of oppositional strategy. Can 'Australian literature' be made to include a genuinely broader range of writing by working for change at the level of selection alone, or even by working there first?

6.2 Challenges to the history

New directions in the historiography of Australian literature seem, at this point, to be rather few. It is the area in which, on the face of it, the New Critical tradition is being least effectively challenged. There are some practical reasons for this. Literary histories are, by definition, large projects. The *Oxford History* is notable for its sweeping exclusions; yet it is a 500 page blockbuster, and still manages to say little enough about anything in particular. The dimensions of a history which was significantly less exclusive would have to be much greater. Yet even the *Oxford History* was a collaboration, and collaborations need solid institutional backing.

But even if a fully reconstructed version of Australian literary history is unlikely in the near future, it should be remembered that the New Critical version existed, in its essentials, long before the *Oxford History*, in articles like Heseltine's and anthologies like Cantrell's.

There have, in fact, been some fairly recent histories, or part-histories, which could certainly be regarded as oppositional. What is less certain is that they represent anything new. For instance, both Dorothy Green's recently completed third volume of the late H.M. Green's *History of Australian Literature*, and T. Inglis Moore's *Social Patterns in Australian Literature*, can probably be regarded as belated contributions to radical-nationalist historiography. Other possibilities are Geoffrey Serle's book and Terry Sturm's contribution (on drama) to the *Oxford History*. In different ways, both of these seem to strike out in new directions, but Serle's innovations, arguably, are more apparent than real. He juxtaposes developments in

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literature with developments in the other arts and in the realm of ideas. Moreover, by doing so, he claims to be presenting a 'new theory of cultural growth'. This claim is examined by the historian David Walker (who finds it unwarranted) in the next short reading.

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Now read David Walker, *Dream and Disillusion* (excerpt), reading 35.

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Sturm's innovation consists in having written a history of Australian drama in which the social and material dimensions of the drama are fully integrated with the historical narrative. Re-read Docker's few paragraphs on it at the end of his review of the *Oxford History* (reading 31).

6.3 Challenges to the criticism

It is in the area of criticism, the analysis and interpretation of individual literary texts, that the challenges to the New Critical orthodoxy have been most sustained and numerous - and also, perhaps, most effectively oppositional. The challenges and innovations can be roughly categorised into three groups:

1. Comparison
2. Contextualism
3. Deconstruction

We shall look at each of these in turn.

6.3.1 Comparison

The idea of a 'comparative method' in literary criticism is not in itself new; comparative analyses of two or more works has been a standard critical possibility for most of this century - (though you may remember from Docker's account of the 'Sydney Split' (reading 25) that the more extreme Leavisites considered that formal comparison violated the work's unique individuality). What is new in recent Australian criticism is the systematic elaboration of a variety of comparative contexts into which literary works can be inserted, with the intended result that new and unexpected aspects of the work come into focus. Some of these comparative contexts appear in Bennett's account of undergraduate courses in Australian universities: they include two-nation comparisons (Australia-America, Australia-Canada, Australia-New Zealand, most commonly), and multi-nation comparisons (Commonwealth literature, Pacific literature). This is by no means a radical innovation, and its capacity for generating new insights is fairly limited, except in cases where something more than different national contexts are being compared - for example, different socio-cultural definitions of literature itself.

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6.3.2 Contextualism

This term has been adopted by John Docker, most notably, to refer to a form of criticism that attempts to analyse literary texts in terms of the social and historical contexts of their production. It rejects the New Critical concentration on the 'purely literary' - and in fact denies the validity of any such isolated category. Contextualist criticism can be regarded, most simply, as the critical/interpretative counterpart to the method of literary history exemplified, in Docker's account, by Sturm's chapter in the *Oxford History*. Rather than attempting to develop a critical terminology all their own, 'contextualist' critics tend to avail themselves, wherever possible, of the terms and methods of disciplines such as history and sociology - while retaining whatever is useful from the traditional methods of literary criticism.

6.3.3 Deconstruction

The term 'deconstructionist' is used to refer to a particular group of contemporary American philosophers and critics whose work involves - as the word suggests - the 'deconstructing', or 'un-building', or 'dismantling', of a range of concepts and supposed realities which usually go unquestioned in more conventional literary criticism. Such concepts as character, plot, narrator, fiction - even the concept of literature - are subjected to critical scrutiny, and analysed in terms of the fundamental units of language from which they are constructed. Having been thus 'deconstructed', the concepts may either be reconstructed in different, more useful ways. or they may be dismissed altogether as misleading.

In its more radical forms, involving the dismantling of such apparently basic concepts as the reader, the text and language itself, deconstructionism can become extremely obscure, and we shall not be attempting to pursue such paths in this course. But as a general principle, deconstruction can be a useful and manageable technique. We shall be looking at some mildly 'deconstructive' examples of literary criticism in the next section; but we might also note that the method employed in this course as a whole has been mildly deconstructive, inasmuch as we have deconstructed the notion of 'literary tradition' into a set of more fundamental 'operations' - those of selection, connection and interpretation.

6.4 An Example: Terry Sturm on *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith*

To exemplify the critical innovations we have just been discussing, we shall now work through a critical article on *The Chant* written by Terry Sturm. This will be done by posing a series of questions together with answers that cover the relevant points. These should not be regarded as

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'model answers' for you to imitate in the assessment, but rather as a collection of ideas to be drawn upon when appropriate.

****

Now read Terry Sturm, 'Thomas Keneally and Australian racism', reading 36.

****

Question 1.

What elements of a 'contextualist' approach are there in Sturm's analysis of *The Chant*?

Answer

The most clearly 'contextualist' element is Sturm's overall conception of the novel as a specifically directed social critique (p.6) rather than a 'pure' literary representation of experience or 'life'. This point could be developed in more detail, referring to the historically specific issues - white concepts of property, marriage and justice - at which the critique is said to be directed. The main fact to note, however, is simply Sturm's willingness to treat a work of literature as a quite legitimate act of social and political commitment.

As with contextualism generally, this rejection of a depoliticised, dehistoricised notion of 'pure literature' is innovative in relation to the current New Critical orthodoxy, but not in relation to the radical nationalists, A.A. Phillips for example, for whom the constant interplay between literature and its social and historical context was simply assumed.

A further instance of this might be Sturm's willingness to breach the New Critical barrier between writer and critic. Like Phillips in his discussion of Furphy (reading 29), Sturm tends to make whatever negative judgments he expresses into occasions for suggesting practical alternatives, as if to a working writer engaged in an activity not different in kind from that of the critic (p.7). (cf. the *Meanjin* debate, section 5.1.3)

Question 2.

What 'deconstructionist' elements are there in the article? What particular 'objects' or terms central to New Critical orthodoxy does Sturm 'deconstruct'?

Answer

A number of literary categories, used as absolutes in the work of critics like Kramer and Mitchell, are at least relativised - that is, shown to be related to a specific context - if not fully deconstructed. These include the

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categories of 'character', 'novel', 'author' and, to some extent, 'literature'.

The first two categories - character and the novel - are closely interrelated in 'orthodox' literary criticism: you will recall that Kramer and Mitchell both regard the novel as 'essentially' concerned with the complexities of individual character. Sturm's conception of the novel form is considerably less restrictive than this. He is able to recognise and appreciate, for example, the 'expressionist' strategies which produce effects quite different from the 'psychological realism' so valued by Kramer and Mitchell. It is noteworthy that Sturm's broader conception of the novel's formal possibilities is connected (p.3) to a comparison he makes across the genres of drama and prose fiction which are kept separate in the *Oxford History*. There is thus an element here of the first type of critical innovation, comparison, and this facilitates the partial deconstruction of the category 'novel'. Notice that the deconstruction in terms of 'expressionist' literary criteria affects both the presentation of characters and the conduct of the narrative. The 'vices' of externality in characterisation, and discontinuity and flatness in narrative, can now be thought of as legitimate and normal features of an alternative, non-realist literary aesthetic. (There are, however, other more fully developed explanations for these features of the novel, and we shall look at these now.)

The notion of 'character' is firmly tied to an ideology of individualism in the New Critical orthodoxy, as we saw in our discussion of the *Oxford History*. Sturm's treatment of Jimmie shifts away from the view of him as a complex and tormented individual 'self' - the view of Mitchell, and also, you may remember, of the author of Brodie's notes on this novel (section 3.1.4). The shift is towards a view of the character 'Jimmie' as a set of unresolved social contradictions, not as a 'personality' in the usual sense at all. The key statement of this partially deconstructed conception of character is on p.2: ('When the tenuous tribal identity...' down to '... white standards.')

It should be said that Sturm does not depart from a psychological model of character altogether, which is why it is better to speak of a 'shift' rather than a completely new approach. It would be a radical move indeed for a critic to disregard - or rather 're-read' in entirely different terms - Keneally's own psychological commentary on Jimmie, limited though it might be. Sturm's innovation in this respect is a matter of emphasis: rather than trying to incorporate the contradictions in Jimmie's behaviour into a psychological account of his character he allows some of them to stand as 'directly expressive' (p.2) of the social contradictions which are objectively in the Australian community.

Sturm's treatment of Keneally's authorship is similarly relativised. While it is not clear that Sturm has adopted a

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completely deconstructed view of authorship (of the kind you examined in Course HP03b, *Authorship*), he certainly recognises, in this particular instance, a legitimate attempt to unveil some of the practical processes of writing fiction - for example, the selection and rearrangement of materials that already have a certain arrangement and rationale - which are veiled by the individualistic image of authorship. At the same time, and perhaps more obviously, Sturm recognises in the novel a deconstructed view of the historian (p.3); in fact, the essence of the deconstruction involved is to bring the two activities - writing fiction and writing history - much closer together.

The distinction between 'literature' and 'documentation' so central, as we saw, to Leonie Kramer's scheme of literary values, also goes by the board in Sturm's analysis (p.4). He is able to recognise and justify the inclusion of large amounts of actual documentary material in the novel - newspaper accounts, private letters and the like. (Note, however, that the literary justification for this technique depends on a prior assumption on the reader's part that the two kinds of material are very different.)

Question 3.

What elements of the New Critical orthodoxy remain in Sturm's criticism?

Answer

Sturm's article is by no means radical in its degree of innovation, and there are at least two 'orthodox' features of his criticism. The first is his use of the typically New Critical technique of 'close reading', exemplified in his analysis of several short passages from the novel (pp.5-7). The second is his apparent assumption (p.5) of the absolute value of some kind of formal unity in a novel.

It should be added, finally, that these orthodox features, particularly the former, are not inherently undesirable. The history of criticism is probably best conceived in dialectical terms: that is, some elements from a given phase of criticism are discarded while others are taken on and incorporated in a succeeding phase. Thus, the social emphasis of the radical nationalists' criticism reappears, stripped of its idealism, in the 'contextualism' of Docker and Sturm. Similarly, the close reading techniques developed by the New Critics have been retained, largely stripped of their depoliticising and dehistoricising effects, by recent 'deconstructionist' tendencies in criticism.

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TUTORIAL THREE

We shall be discussing the material in sections 5 and 6, in preparation for which you should bring your responses to SAQs 21 to 25. We shall also discuss the assessment item.

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7 CONCLUSION

You will remember that this course began with a preliminary exercise in which you were asked to classify a list of items according to whether or not in your view, they fell within the category of 'Australian literature'. Before drawing our discussion to a conclusion it would be useful if you were to glance back at that exercise, and at the answers you gave. It may be that the material covered in this course would cause you to give different answers now. (Think briefly about whether it would before reading on.)

Alternatively, it may be that you could now recognise the criteria you applied to those items as criteria provided by, and distinctive to, a particular definition of 'Australian literature' with which you have at some stage been in contact. It would now be clear, for example, that exclusions made on the basis of an author's non-Australian birthplace, place of residence or subject matter are very much out of favour with the New Critical orthodoxy of the last twenty-five years or so. Critics like Heseltine, Mitchell and Kramer preach a kind of 'internationalism' in terms of which any such crudely national criteria are strongly disapproved. In that respect it could be claimed that the New Critical tradition - as embodied, for instance, in the *Oxford History* - has broadened the definition of 'Australian literature' to include authors and works that might have been excluded, or put in a 'doubtful' category, by the older nationalist tradition. This applies particularly to expatriate authors like Henry Handel Richardson, Frederic Manning and Christina Stead who have explored non-Australian themes and settings in their writing.

On the other hand, as we noted in the section on the *Oxford History* (5.3), the New Critical definition of 'Australian literature' is in some other respects narrower than that of the radical nationalists. It tends to exclude or marginalise both 'popular' and 'documentary' forms of writing which occupied an important place in the older canon. Thus, books like Jack Lindsay's autobiographical *Life Rarely Tells*, Manning Clark's *History of Australia* and Frank Hardy's *Power Without Glory* might well be present in a radical nationalist version of Australian literature, and absent (because of their documentary component) from a New Critical version. As far as 'popular' writing is concerned, it is probably true to say that while the older nationalism was, and is, favourably disposed towards the products of what it regards as traditional Australian 'folk culture' - bush ballads and the like - it is no more likely than the New Criticism to include the products of contemporary commercial 'mass culture' in its version of Australian literature. Books like Colleen McCullough's *The Thorn Birds* would find themselves excluded by both the dominant traditions in Australian literary studies this century.

Some recent intellectual trends in Australia and elsewhere have broadened the definition of 'Australian

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literature' well beyond what either of the dominant traditions could allow. Quite apart from changes within the area of literary studies as such, for example, the new emphasis on 'multiculturalism' in Australian society has meant that work in languages other than English can be considered Australian; thus the stories of Vasso Kalamaras and the narrative legends of the Aborigines can become part of Australian literature.

Perhaps the most significant recent trend, though, has been the questioning of the category of 'literature' itself, and the recognition of the social power that is involved in distinctions between 'literature' and non-literature'. The ability, held by particular institutions at particular times, to make that categorisation, and to 'make it stick', has quite far-reaching effects in society generally.

The most obvious of these is the effect on education. The currency of the category 'literature' automatically excludes certain kinds of texts from being given any sustained attention in school curricula. But the effects go beyond the school environment. The very notion of a specially 'privileged' series of texts or kinds of texts, occupying a permanent space in society as a whole - even if particular texts change from time to time - can materially affect the perceived status, and therefore the social support given to other forms of written communication. On the other hand, the same notion tends to circumscribe quite severely the ways in which that writing which is defined, or defines itself, as 'literature' can act upon society. The category of 'literature', even in its broadest, most inclusive contemporary versions, can be seen as an inherently 'depoliticising' category.

This leads into questions of political effectivity and the power of classification which will be central concerns in Course HP06b, *Politics and Opinion* and Course HP08a, *Classifications*, so we shall pursue them no further here. We may perhaps conclude the present course by noting that ultimately the question 'What is Australian literature?' must itself be put in question, for the very assumption that there <u>is</u> such an entity as 'Australian literature' - a series of objects both 'Australian' and 'literary' - is neither neutral nor unchallenged.

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FURTHER READING

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ANSWERS TO SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

In the answers given below, the emphasis in general is upon brevity. Where more than one answer is possible, this is indicated, and some additional possibilities are suggested. Some of the questions invite you to speculate as to possible future policy developments and matters of that kind. In such cases, we have indicated that the question is of this type, and that therefore no 'right' answer is expected.

SAQ 1

1. There are many. The epic, the tragedy, the ode, the pastoral, the panegyric (a poem of praise) are all historical examples. Most had lost their relevance as stylistic prescriptions by the mid-nineteenth century.

2. (a) Such traditions are less likely to operate in cultures where writers and artists regard their own work of composition primarily as spontaneous individual self-expression.

   (b) Modern commentators, i.e., critics, reviewers etc., are sometimes more bound by ideologies of spontaneous literary creation than are writers themselves, who have first-hand experience of the real processes of composition by more mundane, less 'inspirational' means.

3. There are what we can call 'residual' elements in the culture, i.e., older forms or styles, more or less self-consciously preserved or revived in the present (e.g., some writers, such as the Brisbane poet John Blight, use traditional verse forms like the sonnet; and there is still a poet laureate in Britain (John Betjeman) who writes 'public' poems - panegyrics and the like - for special state occasions). Apart from these fairly isolated examples though, there is the whole field of popular literature - detective novels, westerns, popular romance, etc. - which display many of the features of the older 'rhetorical' mode of composition: use of stock situations, stock character-types, and highly conventionalised plots and styles. Folk songs might be another example.

SAQ 2

1. (b), (c), and (d) come closest, but none of the three by itself seems adequate.

2. Again, (b), (c), and (d) all seem generally appropriate, but this is complicated by the fact that each of the three tends to be defined in terms of one or both of the other two.

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3. Generally, (b); however, in particular instances, a version of direct influence (a) is claimed (e.g. between Henry James and George Eliot), and for that matter, in the case of Conrad, no explicit connections (c) are said to exist.

4. There is, of course, a virtually unlimited number, but some spring to mind, as having been highly regarded in other quarters, and as having been written within the same time period as Leavis's 'great tradition' (i.e., about 1800 to 1930). They include Thackeray, Trollope, Meredith, Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, E.M. Forster and the Brontes.

   It's doubtful whether a really adequate general reason can be found. However, looking at the writers just mentioned, and comparing them with those of the 'great tradition', a possibility that comes to mind is 'lack of moral seriousness' (as Leavis would term it) or 'solemnity' as others might. However, this would hardly account for, say, the presence of Jane Austen in the tradition, or the absence of Thomas Hardy. This is a speculative question.

5. It could be argued, even by those who reject the literary and moral assumptions of Leavis's particular version of the normative tradition, that his attempt was useful inasmuch as it made explicit the workings of normative traditions in literature generally. By being made explicit, such traditions are made more open to challenge. Strictly speaking, though, even this is not an argument in favour of the concept of a 'great tradition' as such; it is an argument about the value of having people like Leavis to expose the weaknesses of the literary critical establishment.

SAQ 3

1. Of the four generalised instances Williams gives - 'families, places, institutions, a language' - the last three could all provide examples. The Cambridge environment, for example, clearly lent a certain authority to Leavis's redefined 'great tradition'. A very different example would be the authority given to the 'bush nationalist' tradition in Australian literature by the bush itself. The power of institutional continuities for literature is very great: one thinks immediately of educational institutions, but there are less obvious examples - television would be one - of institutions that effectively support dominant literary traditions.

2. Three points need to be mentioned:

   (a) The recovery of neglected texts

   (b) The reinterpretation of recognised texts

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(c) Rewriting literary history so that the recovered and reinterpreted texts are seen to have relevance to the present.

3. This is Williams at his most difficult. Don't worry if you weren't able to make much of it. What he is saying is that a particular dominant tradition is vulnerable not only because what it excludes may still be recoverable (the first point), but also because the selections it makes are in reality influenced by forces in the larger society. Hence, a potentially effective critique might consist of exposing these pressures - demonstrating, for example, that certain forms of 'working-class' writing have been excluded for ideological rather than purely aesthetic reasons.

Another example: to show connections between a preoccupation with individual psychology in literature and a tendency to understand society (e.g. the problem of unemployment) in individualistic terms.

SAQ 4

This question is really quite speculative, since Bromfield does not indicate a clear preference for any alternative ordering to the one used by the Gallery. Possibly a purely chronological ordering would be acceptable as the most 'natural' arrangement, conveying no particular thesis about the history of art. The intended effect would then be to clear the viewer's mind of unwanted questions of historical relations, making it possible to focus exclusively on the qualities of the individual paintings.

2. Mollison's acquisitions are clearly determined by his allegiance to a particular historical progression in world art (the 'connective operation'): he chooses works as links in the progression rather than as objects in their own right. They must 'fit in'. The formalism of his approach to individual works facilitates the 'discovery' of links between everything. It justifies the purchase of aesthetically inferior works on the grounds of their historical significance.

3. Not very. Bromfield might well have replied that his failure to specify the particular subgroups within the New York School was irrelevant, since he is fairly clearly referring to the abstract tendencies of that art (i.e., the first three of Evatt's list of minor movements). Moreover, the mere purchase of American art does not necessitate other art being placed in historical relation to it, which is Bromfield's main criticism.

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SAQ 5

1. By McCaughey's account, Australian art is presented in terms of a definite historical progression. But it seems to differ from the larger 'story' of world art in at least three ways:

   (a) It is a localised story; hence, the continuities proposed are not superimposed by critics and gallery directors to the same extent.

   (b) It is not a single progression: there are at least two different progressions, which have sometimes been in conflict (Nolan vs. Tucker) and sometimes come together (Boyd).

   (c) It is not a formalist history: both major progressions are marked by distinctive themes and values (e.g., bush innocence, urban alienation) rather than by particular tendencies of form and style.

2. The third paragraph of the reading makes the same point about the artists of the Heidelberg School as Graeme Davison, Richard White and others have made about the *Bulletin* writers of the 1890s: that they were largely an urban-centred bohemian coterie, for whom the bush was an 'ideal contrary' to the city rather than a directly experienced social milieu.

SAQ 6

1. Moral improvement: poems and stories were chosen for the 'message' they carried, which could work to improve moral character either by positive or negative example. The purposes of history were essentially similar. Factual knowledge took second place to moral improvement.

2. Because of the republican and socialist-tending sentiments expressed in their work. Writers who figured prominently in the *CSP* included Henry Kendall, Dorothea Mackellar and George Essex Evans. (Several others are mentioned.) What they had in common was the 'respectable' patriotism (as opposed to radical nationalism) that saw no conflict between loyalty to Australia and loyalty to England and the Empire.

3. (a) The Empire was not celebrated in the Catholic readers, but there was little, if any, anti-British feeling expressed. Ireland, rather than England, was the 'motherland'.

   (b) Patriotism was endorsed in the Catholic readers, but without the aggressive military sentiments characteristic of the public school readers.

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(c) Whereas the public schools either condemned the Aborigines as cruel savages, or condescended to them as overgrown children, the Catholic system encouraged a more positive, perhaps idealised, view of their personal qualities and social relationships.

4. A book called *Thoughts for Teachers* by a school inspector, Donald Fraser (reading 7, p.13). This contained elements of radical nationalism in the significance accorded to the Eureka Stockade and the Workers' Educational Association, and in the list of Australian books and authors he compiled as suitable for use in schools.

SAQ 7

1. (a) The convicts were largely ignored by the makers of the 'pioneer legend', or else their capacity for rehabilitation as free settlers was stressed. By contrast, the 'bush legend' celebrates the convicts as the original representatives of anti-authoritarianism, egalitarianism and mateship.

(b) The squatters (together with the selectors) were regarded as heroic individualists, pitting their skill and courage against a hostile land; in the 'bush legend' they are identified as the class enemy of the 'true' Australian, the bush worker.

(c) The pioneer legend accords no respect to the Aborigines whatever; they are seen as a hindrance to pastoral expansion. However, the bush legend is no less racist in its nineteenth-century manifestations, though there is the potential for a more enlightened view, perhaps taken up in this century by 'bush nationalists' like Xavier Herbert.

(d) Women occupy a more important place in the pioneer legend than in the bush legend. This can perhaps be related to the emphasis on the family in the typical 'pioneering' situation.

(e) The bush itself is seen as a hostile environment, conquered and tamed by the pioneers. In the bush legend it is viewed more positively: the bushman is 'in tune' with his surroundings, not in constant conflict with them.

2. The opening up of the western plains (reading 8, pp.8-9) - hence, in particular, the crossing of the Blue Mountains. This was regarded (e.g. by James Collier) as the beginning of a freer, more independent state of Australian society.

3. Patrick White and Judith Wright have (in a very limited sense only) helped to perpetuate it. Xavier Herbert and

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Brian Penton actively opposed it in their novels; their critique was directed to the glossing over, by the legend, of the real brutality and exploitation of the early settlers' lives.

SAQ 8

1. Each list contains some Shakespeare (British, but perhaps a special category).

   1900 (*CSP* lists)

   British: more than 50%
   Australian and American: less than 50%

   1982

   British: 4 plays + 1 novel (+ x poems)
   American: 3 plays
   Australian: y poems (+ a novel-option)
   Other: 2 plays

   Exact comparisons are impossible, but the general point is that British literature still represents about 50% of the prescribed literature in 1982, just as it did in 1900. The continuity might be taken to suggest either a degree of hidden colonialism in contemporary Australian society or the conservatism of educational institutions in particular, or both.

2. The difference could be related to the much less direct relation between literature and social morality in 1982: literature is perceived more as an autonomous realm of objects (literary works) to be distinguished and differentiated in their own intrinsic (i.e., formal) terms. The stipulation (under 'General Reading', of one non-fictional work, suggests some interest in questioning the boundaries of literature, and hence the traditional generic categories (+ 8 'books'; no genre for 5).

3. The stipulation for a novel by a recognised Australian author, instead of a 'recognised English classic' is probably intended to support what is widely perceived as a growing sense of national independence. The various probable effects are:

   (a) The grudging inclusion of one more Australian text is unlikely to change perception of Australian literature as minor in relation to British (and even American) literature.

   (b) Since only authors of 'standing' are permitted, and since this 'standing' is taken to be quite unproblematical and perhaps self-evident, the amendment is unlikely to throw much light on the processes by which canonical writers are selected, and 'standing' conferred.

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(c) The inclusion of K.S. Prichard makes it at least possible that the so-called 'nationalist' canon will receive some attention.

SAQ 9

1. Self-fulfilment, through social interaction, personal reflection and vicarious emotional experience. The benefits envisaged by the 1904 syllabus are more in the area of assimilating recognised moral and social values, and a technical knowledge of language.

2. In both, the value of aesthetic experience, literary or artistic, is that it enlarges the individual's fund of significant personal experience.

3. If the primary interest in a work of art is the degree to which it matches up with one's own experience, its historical location will seem external to it, and of no immediate relevance.

4. The individual response emphasis tends to devalue the collective response on which an interest in the national dimension would be based.

SAQ 10

1. Individualisation: 'the world of Jimmie Blacksmith'.

2. Real-isation: 'characters whose emotions and fortunes we discuss as if they were alive'.

3. Insulation: 'authors ... who have pushed around symbols on a page, black shapes on paper, and created setting, characters, realistic situations, credible conflicts, and breath-stopping tension'.

(Note: the emphasis on the author's 'creative miracle' - cf. 'metamorphosis of his imagined world' - implies that the author wields a kind of moral as well as imaginative responsibility for what happens in the novel.)

SAQ 11

1. The letter writers assume that literature can have a direct and powerful effect on the reader's conduct - they are particularly concerned with 'depraving' effects - whereas the 1977 syllabus writers implicitly deny the possibility of direct effects of this kind.

2. The 1977 writers give a high value to the 'experience of the world' literature gives its readers. The letter writers regard such experience as dangerous (because potentially depraving) - no less so than corresponding experiences in real life would be.

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3. The two are similar in that both attribute to literature the capacity to affect conduct in a direct way - whether by depraving or improving it. By contrast, the designers of the 1977 syllabus treat literature as a passive storehouse of vicarious experiences.

SAQ 12

1. The Scott Committee statement, which appeared only one year after the 1977 English syllabus, nonetheless moves in clearly different educational directions. The seven concepts listed are used and valued in significantly different ways in the two documents. Any three could provide the basis for a comparison.

   (a) Experience: notice that although the report continues to pay lip service to the idea of learning as 'experience' (paras 2 and 3), the concomitant emphasis on the planning and standardising of the experience tends to contradict the individualistic thrust of the true 'growth model' as represented in the syllabus (1977).

   (b) Understanding: the intended restriction of individual development is made fairly explicit in the second last paragraph. 'Understanding' society is not sufficient.

   (c) Fundamental values: notice that even though the report claims (p.2, para. 2) not to know what the community's 'consensus' standards and values are, it speaks as if it does (p.2, paras 3 and 7). The general thrust of the report is that teaching these values is the primary goal of education.

   (d) Models of conduct: significantly, the report is concerned with the presence of undesirable 'models of conduct' in the existing curriculum (p.1, para. 4). This concern represents a new emphasis on the direct moral effects of teaching materials.

   (e) Relevancy: one of the key aims of the 1977 syllabus, 'relevancy', is explicitly associated by the report with the other 'liberal' aim of individual development (p.2, para. 5), and held up to grave suspicion.

   (f) Community: the notion of 'the community' as the arbiter of moral and social values is quite explicit in the report; the exploration of 'alternative' values is strictly subordinated to it. However, there is a certain continuity (perhaps more apparent than real) in the emphasis in both syllabus and report on developing a 'sense of community' (p.2, para. 3).

   (g) Maturity: a key term in the 'growth model'. The syllabus reading 11, p.1 wishes to 'promote the

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maturity of the student to the limit of his capacities'. The report implicitly rejects this as a primary goal. It is far more important for 'youth' or 'young people' to be given 'guiding criteria' by the wiser (and older) representatives of the 'community'.

2. Two important similarities:

   (a) An assumption that teaching materials (e.g. literature) have a direct effect on moral conduct.

   (b) An assertion of the rights of the 'wider community' (so defined by its spokespersons) to dictate the values purveyed in the education system.

SAQ 13

Melbourne - left liberal, moral earnestness, belief in human perfectibility, political commitment, nationalism.

Sydney - right liberal, libertarian, sceptical as to human perfectibility, apolitical, internationalist.

SAQ 14

1. The nationalist writers of the 1890s (Lawson, Furphy, etc.) and the social-realist writers of the 1930s.

2. In practice, if not in principle, the canon was composed of novels rather than poetry or drama. The favoured values and themes were those of the 'common man', the bush, Australian nationalism, and progressive (i.e., leftward tending) politics.

3. Literature and life - especially social and political life - were seen as interpenetrating realities. Literature 'both reflected and formulated (i.e., gave a particular expression to) the common experience of the Australian people'.

SAQ 15

1. In the mid-nineteenth century, the emergence of a 'confident national literature' in America was taken by Australian cultural historians as an evolutionary model (often depicted in terms of organic growth) according to which a distinctively Australian national literature was also bound to emerge. In the late nineteenth century, this evolutionary optimism, based on the parallel with America, was disputed (e.g., by T.G. Tucker and Desmond Byrne).

2. Literature was regarded as being able to 'give a country nationality' (i.e., some sort of essential identity)

where its material achievements or endowments ('sheep and acres') could not: it could 'restore a lost sense of community, and morally elevate the masses'.

SAQ 16

1. The remarks on the *Bulletin* writers of the 1890s ('The nationalist sentiment ... portraits in the national mind', pp.1-2), and those on the 'internationalist' tendencies of the 1920s ('After 1918 there was a slight break ... Literature lost its popular character, its close touch with the people', p.2) both invoke 'populist' criteria - in the first instance positively, in the second, negatively.

2. The populist concept of a 'people' or 'folk' who hold in their possession the authentic Australian tradition allows Moore to argue, as he does, that even when the 'high' literary tradition (White, Stow, McAuley, etc.) no longer manifests the 'authentic' values, they can still be found where they always reside in any case, at the level of popular culture.

SAQ 17

1. (a) The conservative Anglophilic attitudes of literary academics.

   (b) The underdeveloped state of book and journal publication in Australia.

2. (a) First phase (1940-49): the establishment of the Commonwealth Literary Fund lectures.

   (b) Second phase (1950-59): the *Meanjin* debate on Australian literature and the universities.

   The CLF, set up as a federal government cultural initiative, and merely tolerated by the universities as a sop to nationalism, epitomises the detachment of academics at this time from the question of Australian literature. The *Meanjin* debate shows academic attitudes beginning to change, the detachment from the national literature beginning to break down.

SAQ 18

1. For the study of Australian literature (as for American and Canadian literature) one needs a knowledge of the 'parent stem', i.e., 'the sources for imagery, ideas, language, fashions and style'.

2. Little, if any, relationship. Literature is regarded as having significant relationships only with other literature.

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3. Two reasons:

   (a) Assuming that undergraduate students will need to cover English literature in full, there is no room for it.

   (b) A more 'critical' audience is needed for Australian literature than for English literature. (Why?)

4. An 'improper' function for criticism would be anything approaching a practical working relationship with 'writers'. The reasons for Jeffares's objection to this will not be self-evident at this stage; they have to do partly with the professional status of academics, and partly with a conception of literary works as fully autonomous entities.

SAQ 19

1. It is explicitly both: 'educative' - 'to foster critical understanding and to civilise the imagination'; 'scientific universities ... exist primarily for the promotion of studies, for the advancement of knowledge in particular fields'. (Note: it is interesting that Hope's strongest claim for Australian literary studies is made on the basis of the scientific function.)

2. The 'university line' is shown in his unquestioning acceptance of an absolute order of literary values in which Australian literature ranks low, and in his view of Australian literature as a branch of English literature.

   The 'nationalist line' appears in his proposal for the study of Australian literature outside departments of English literature.

SAQ 20

1. (a) They (the radical nationalists) excluded important areas of Australian literature - notably those of the colonial period (pre-1890).

   (b) They applied non-literary criteria to their analysis of literature (e.g., social and political criteria of 'nationality').

2. In response to 1(a), that their own canon is no less exclusive. In response to 1(b), that 'literary' criteria turn out to be 'moral' criteria, which are no less fallible than any other kind.

3. The 're-reading' in moral and metaphysical terms of the classic authors of the 1890s.

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SAQ 21

1. The 'inadequacy' of the Democratic Theme in the complexity of Australian experience.

2. The penal system was a very pure example of a society whose basis is the Nietzschean 'rationalisation of cruelty'. (Hence it could represent the human social order in general.)

3. Furphy's distinctive ideal is a sort of conviviality or sociability. According to Heseltine, this masks his real preoccupation, which is with 'the futility of all human endeavour'.

   Lawson's distinctive ideal of mateship, similarly, is his way of coping with the 'horror of nothingness' and the 'emptiness of existence'.

4. Both were centrally and explicitly concerned with the 'universal passion', i.e., romantic love.

SAQ 22

1. The two large areas of omission are documentary writing, so-called, and popular literature. The first is excluded on the grounds that 'in the space available' its inclusion would have caused 'serious distortion' - which presumably means, not enough space for extended commentary on 'genuine literature' (i.e., novels, poems, plays). The second omission, popular literature, is justified on the very dubious grounds that 'serious writers' mould opinion - whereas popular writers (merely) reflect it. Notice that both sets of reasons rest on quite unexamined assumptions about the category 'literature' and the effect of literature on society.

2. (a) Because Australian literature has reached a kind of natural break or 'breathing space', produced by 'the growth of drama and the ageing of a group of leading poets and prose writers'. It is not entirely clear why this situation (which is itself an effect produced by a pre-existing canon) should call for a new literary history, but the underlying metaphor seems to be one of 'stocktaking' (during a pause in production). If so, this is a strong indication of the evaluative and legislative functions Kramer ascribes to literary studies.

   (b) There are faults of both omission and commission: the chief fault of omission (introduction, para. 2) is the lack of relative and absolute evaluations of writers. (See also final paragraph.) The chief faults of commission are those of the radical nationalists (introduction, para. 3): the introduction of 'extra-literary' considerations such as nationality and social attitudes; an

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'over-protective' attitude on the part of critics - by implication, an undesirably close relationship between writers and critics.

SAQ 23

1. While acknowledging the presence of (potentially demeaning) popular elements in Keneally's work, Mitchell avoids any compromise with the New Critical exclusion of the popular by picturing Keneally as a detached and skilful adapter of popular materials for his 'higher' literary purposes.

2. Absolute human values, divorced from any particular historical or cultural contexts, are identified as Keneally's central themes. These include 'decency', 'integrity' and 'generosity', all typically Leavisite absolutes. You should also note the particular weight given to 'the uniqueness and momentousness of the individual' as a distinctive New Critical emphasis. The theme of 'man's insecurity' (cf. Heseltine) is a further link with the orthodoxy.

3. As a central character, Jimmie has too little moral self-consciousness and too little realistic individuality to meet Mitchell's New Critical criteria of literary merit. He is 'too close to the symbolic'.

   Mitchell explains this relative failure, without compromising his view that individual moral consciousness is central to all of Keneally's work, by arguing that Jimmie is placed between two possible sources of moral self-consciousness ('the parallel truths of Emu-Wren and Mr Neville') without having full access to either one.

4. You may feel that the 'flat' tone is more horrifying in its effect than a more 'involved-seeming' narrative would have produced. Assuming, however, that you agree with Mitchell that the effect is less horrifying than otherwise, his explanation/justification of this effect - that the massacre is an act which is perceived and responded to very differently by different characters - is not the only possible one. An alternative explanation might stress the ritualistic nature and function of the act, which would usually be associated with either symbolic or social readings of the novel (see Sturm's reading, section 6).

SAQ 24

Reynolds analyses the character 'Jimmie' not as a real man with a particular moral psychology (cf. Mitchell), but as a combination of European stereotypes of Aborigines. (This is in many ways a more 'radical' reading, in both political and literary terms, than the Sturm article in the next section.)

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SAQ 25

(a) The aesthetic autonomy of literary works is challenged by courses that emphasise 'the function of literature in relation to society and environment'.

(b) The preoccupation with evaluation is undermined by this same emphasis.

(c) The concentration on 'canonical' works is challenged by courses that deliberately deal with minor or very recent work.

(d) The Anglocentrism of the Australian New Critics is challenged by courses that encourage comparison between Australian and other non-English (e.g. American) literature.

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